LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

PARSHAS TERUMAH

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

ESSAYS ON PARSHAS TERUMAH

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Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Terumah* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

> "The time of your Redemption has arrived."

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of

thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

The parsha Terumah is obviously a fundamental parsha because it represents the model for the future Messianic Age when G-d's presence will spread to the entire world, just as He was revealed in the *Mishkan*, the theme of this parsha.

ESSAY ONE

THE SHEPHERD, GUARD AND FATHER

People who wish to travel on a spiritual journey must protect themselves from negative consequences, misguided spiritual detours, while creating a warm and inviting atmosphere in their lives and homes.

These three functions will be served in the third Bais Hamikdash.

ESSAY ONE

THE SHEPHERD, GUARD AND FATHER

The Hut, Booth and House

This week's parsha is the first of several that features the commandment to contribute to the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary in the desert. The *Mishkan* was but the first in a series of structures that were to serve as Sanctuaries through which G-d's presence would spread to the entire world.

The key phrase that introduces this commandment is:

> And you shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell in them.

Our Sages apply this verse—that employs the plural "in them"—to the Sanctuary each and every one of us must make in one's own heart. Every Jew must become a sanctuary for the Divine presence.

The Midrash provides three parables to help us understand the role of the *Mishkan*. It is self-understood that these three parables must also serve as guides toward the objective of creating our own personal sanctuary.

The Midrash on the aforementioned verse, "Make for Me a sanctuary" states:

> Said the Holy One Blessed is He to Israel: "You are My sheep… and I am the Shepherd. Construct a hut for the Shepherd so that He may come and shepherd you. You are a vineyard… and I am its Guard… Construct a Sukkah [booth] for the guard so that He may guard you. You are children… and I am your Father… It is an honor when they are near their father, and it is an honor when the father is near his children. Construct a house for the Father so that He may dwell among His children. Thus it says, "Make for Me a Sanctuary."

Radal [R. Dovid Luria, a nineteenth century commentator] explains that these three

parables—hut, booth and house—parallel the three Sanctuaries: The *Mishkan* of the desert, the *Mishkan* of Shiloh and the Beit Hamikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

A shepherd's hut is constantly being transported from one place to another along with the sheep that seek pasture in new places. Similarly, the *Mishkan* traveled with the Jewish people as they wandered through the wilderness for almost forty years and for an additional fourteen years that it took them to settle the Land of Israel.

The booth for the guard of the vineyard is stationary. But it is only a semi-permanent structure, for it is not what the guard calls home. This parallels the *Mishkan* of Shiloh whose walls were made out of stone, but the roof consisted of the same cloth coverings of the *Mishkan*, suggesting this Sanctuary's semi-permanent structure.

The third parable of the permanent house built for the father is the analogy for the Holy Temple in Jerusalem which remained the final "dwelling" for G-d, never to be replaced or moved to another location.

An earlier work known as the Akeidah applies the three metaphors in a slightly different fashion:

The transportable booth of the shepherd, he writes, corresponds to all of the structures up until, but not including, the building of the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem because they were all essentially not permanent locations for G-d's dwelling place amongst us.

The first Two Temples, which were eventually destroyed, are best represented by the analogy of the semi-permanent vineyard booth, for these Temples enjoyed some measure of relative permanence.

However, the third analogy—the house built for the father—is best represented by the future third Temple to be built by Moshiach. This future Sanctuary will never be destroyed!

There is still a need to understand why the three categories of Sanctuaries are compared to the hut for a shepherd, a booth for the guard of a vineyard, and a house for the father, respectively.

The Shepherd in the Hut: A Response to Degeneration

The *Mishkan*, about which we read in this week's parsha, was built in response to the Jewish people's degeneration into the worshipping of the golden calf. In this regard the *Mishkan*—as well as future Temples that were modeled after the *Mishkan*—served as a means to protect us—G-d's flock—from physical and spiritual destruction in the same way a shepherd protects his flock from harm.

According to Maimonides, in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, sacrifices were introduced to the Jewish people as a means to wean them off idolatrous practices that involved sacrifices. In his Mishneh Torah, however, Maimonides stresses the supra-rational spiritual nature of sacrifices. They were clearly more than just educational tools to condition them to serve one G-d instead of the many pagan gods they worshipped in the past.

One way of reconciling the apparently contradictory approaches Maimonides took about the nature of sacrifices in the Temple

is to distinguish between the original and early formative years of the Jewish people and the latter more mature state of the Jewish nation. Alternatively, these two opposite objectives of sacrifices were directed at two segments of the Jewish community: those who are spiritual novices and those who have gained spiritual sophistication.

However, this function of a *Mishkan* is by definition a temporal one. In the days of Moshiach, G-d will have removed all impurity and iniquity from the world. We will no longer require the offerings in the Temple that were brought as atonements for our sins. And we will no longer have to wean ourselves off of the idolatrous ways of our ancestors.

Hence the Midrash tells us that in the future Messianic Age the only private sacrifice that will still need to be offered will be the thanksgiving sacrifice. No matter how good things will be then, we will still offer thanks to G-d for the constantly improving situation.

The Shepherd in the Booth: Channels our Passion

The analogy of the shepherd who protects his flock relates to the aspect of the Temple that protected us from falling into the trap of idolatry in both the literal as well the figurative sense of the word. This function will cease to be needed as we progress and mature. But before that occurs, the metaphor of a hut erected for a shepherd is an apt one since this function is only of a temporary nature.

This then is why the Midrash provides a second analogy for the Sanctuary: It is like the guard who protects the vineyard and simultaneously introduces a more advanced function of the various Sanctuaries.

A vineyard is a place that produces the most significant of beverages—wine. Wine is a source of joy and increases passion, often to the point of intoxication. Spiritually speaking, wine represents the spiritual energies that we imbibe when we access the inner dimension of Torah. These teachings, when taught to those who are yet ill-prepared for them or

when they are taken too far—have proven to be destructive. The primary example of this was the death of Aaron's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, when, in their spiritually intoxicated state at the time of the dedication of the *Mishkan*, got too close to their Divine source. As a result their souls literally left their bodies.

In other words, the Temple, served simultaneously and paradoxically as the greatest source of spiritual inspiration and exultation as well as the "booth" that protected those who entered its precincts. The Temple saved them from the harmful effects that could result from one's inability to curb and control their passion. G-d's purpose in having them build the Sanctuary was to make the world a hospitable place for G-d; not to detach oneself from the world even if it is for the purpose of getting close to G-d. The Temple, while it uplifts us, nevertheless also brings us back down to earth.

But, even these two goals—protecting us both from harm that comes from sin and simultaneously from misguided spirituality—

realized by the Beit Hamikdash were of a temporal nature.

Even in the days of the two Temples—when the Divine Presence rested amongst us—the world was still not fully receptive to the Divine. It was still possible for Jews to come to the Temple during the three pilgrimage holidays, imbibe the intense G-dly energy, and still emerge into the outside world just as vulnerable as they were before they entered.

In the days of the First Temple the level of Divine light that was generated was so intense that it overwhelmed the people. It was therefore not able to be fully internalized within them.

During the Second Temple era, the spiritual level was more in tune with the capacity of the people to feel and absorb its influence. However, since it was a more filtered measure of G-dly light it did not possess the same awesome power to totally transform either the macro- or micro-world. Both Temples were ultimately destroyed.

The Third Temple: The Father is at Home

The third Temple, Chassidic thought teaches us, will encompass the positive attributes of the two Temples of the past. It will unleash the most sublime G-dly energy, even beyond that which was revealed in the first Temple era. Yet, simultaneously, we will be fully capable of receiving, absorbing, internalizing and retaining these transcendent forces. We will have, as they say, the best of both worlds. That will preclude even the possibility of the Temple and its concomitant effects to ever be terminated or even diminished.

We can now understand why the Midrash, when referring to the third analogy of the father who has a house built to be with his son, states:

> It is an honor for the sons to be with their father and an honor for a father to be with his sons.

The dual honor the Midrash speaks of can be said to allude to the two paradoxical features of the future third Temple:

On the one hand it will reveal G-d's honor and glory to His children in an unprecedented fashion even as it will reveal

the unprecedented spiritual capacity and honor of the children. In the Messianic Age, G-d and the Jewish people will enjoy a harmonious relationship because the essence of both will be fully revealed. And at the level of the "essence" there is absolute unity between our Heavenly Father and ourselves.

In our own lives, we must create a Sanctuary for G-d which serves a threefold function of:

a) Protecting us from sin and its negative consequences;

b) Protecting ourselves from the misguided spiritual journeys that an inspired person may take;

c) Creating a warm and inviting atmosphere in our lives and homes to make us fully receptive to Moshiach and Redemption.

The Three Pronged Preparation

How do we achieve these goals specifically in these last days of exile?

The Midrash provides us with an answer to this question. The Midrash's comments that were just expounded are linked to the specific commandment to make the Ark that contained the Tablets. The Ark and the Tablets connote the study of the Torah.

More specifically, the Tablets in which the Ten Commandments were engraved refer to the aspect of Torah that deals with Redemption. This assertion is based on the word "*charus*-engraved" which is cognate to the word "*cheirus*", which means freedom. This is an allusion to the part of Torah that is liberating. In general terms this includes the mystical teachings of Torah such as Kabbalah and Chassidus, which were previously hidden from us. In addition, these spiritual teachings have the capacity to unlock and liberate the hidden dimensions of our souls. But, more specifically, the "engraved/liberating" component of Torah refers to the parts of Torah that deal explicitly with the theme of Redemption.

Thus, the method that we were given to achieve all of these goals is the study of Torah, specifically the teachings about

Moshiach and Redemption. The Torah helps us cultivate the mindset that liberates us from and makes us impervious to sin, puts controls on the soul's desire to disengage from the world, and helps us shape and mold our lives to be in complete harmony with the Divine. These three approaches taken together prepare us for the imminent revelation of Moshiach and the building of the third Beit Hamikdash.

ESSAY TWO

IMPULSIVE

There are two forms of impulsiveness.

The first is negative folly.

The second is holy folly.

ESSAY TWO

IMPULSIVE

A Puzzling Midrash

The opening verse of this week's parsha contains the key phrase, "they shall take for Me an offering." This was G-d's commandment to the Jewish people to contribute to the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary in the desert.

One enigmatic Midrashic comment, when deciphered, will assist us in understanding the significance of this structure.

The Midrash states,

> "When the Jewish nation said *na'aseh*-we shall do' before *nishma*-we shall listen," G-d said, 'they shall take for Me an offering."

There is an obvious need for us to understand what the connection is between their enthusiastic acceptance of the Torah—mentioned at the end of last week's parsha—and G-d's commandment to contribute to the building of the *Mishkan*.

And since both our acceptance of the Torah and the building of the *Mishkan* are ongoing processes—we must accept the Torah and construct a Sanctuary in our own hearts everyday anew —the explanation of the foregoing Midrash must have relevance to our own lives as well.

Inspiration Translated

A simple but relevant approach is that when the Jewish people expressed such exuberant acceptance of the Torah it was necessary for them to quickly translate their excitement into something concrete.

Inspiration comes often to each and every one of us. The question is, what can we do to make the inspiration endure? The Midrash's approach here is simple: Take your life and turn it into a sanctuary for G-d. Do concrete

things so that the inspiration becomes the soul of your actions. A soul by itself cannot stay grounded; its nature is to fly away and connect to its source. A soul-less body cannot survive. Likewise inspiration without commensurate action is like a soul without a body and so will "fly away," while action that is not infused with spirit and devotion will not endure.

We must still look for additional insight as to why this message of harnessing the inspiration to action is specifically connected to the Jewish people's prefacing *na'aseh* before *nishma,* "I will do" before "I will listen." There are many way one can show enthusiasm, and there are many ways one can translate that enthusiasm into practical deeds. Why specifically does the Midrash pick on their prefacing "*na'aseh*-we will do" before "*nishma*-we will listen" as the inspiration that needed to be concretized? And second, why did G-d select this specific approach—contributing to the construction of the Sanctuary—as the means of concretizing that inspiration?

Mouth before Ears

The Talmud relates that a heretic once observed how the great Sage Rava was studying Torah and was oblivious to the way his fingers were bleeding. The heretic criticized Rava by saying that he was a member of a people who "put their mouth before their ears." He meant that when we were informed that we would receive the Torah we were so enthusiastic about it that we impulsively responded with our mouths, "we will do" even before we heard what accepting the Torah would entail. Similarly, the heretic implied that Rava too was impulsive and so eager to study Torah that he was not aware of his own hand bleeding.

From this passage in the Talmud we can gather that their reciting *na'aseh* before *nishma* was an expression of impulsive behavior which, nonetheless, the Talmud considers to be a great virtue.

The question arises, isn't impulsive behavior a negative trait? Haven't we read in the Torah that Jacob criticized his son Reuven for his impulsiveness?

The answer can be derived from the analysis in a Chassidic discourse (entitled *Basi L'gani*) the previous Rebbe issued to be studied on the day of his passing and has since become the major Chassidic classic of our generation. Since 1950 the Rebbe has devoted at least one discourse a year elucidating the landmark discourse of his predecessor.

Folly: Good and Bad

One of the central themes of these discourses is that there are two forms of folly. There is a median level of rational behavior and logic. Deviating in any direction from this mean is called *shetus*-folly in Hebrew. Deviating below the line of normality is referred to as *shetus dekelipah,* or negative folly, that is generally associated with immoral behavior. A positive form of foolishness is when a person goes beyond the limits of their rational mind to do good. This is also called folly, but with the additional qualifier: *shetus d'kedushah*-holy folly.

This can also explain the difference between the two forms of impulsiveness. When

impulsive behavior causes a person to perform an action that goes against the will of Jacob, who was the spiritual leader of his generation, as was the case with Reuven, it was deemed improper and therefore criticized by Jacob. When impulsive behavior brings a person closer to Sinai, i.e., to acceptance of and dedication to Torah and Mitzvos, it is laudable.

We can now understand why the Midrash links the words "and take for me an offering" with the Jewish people's uttering the words "we will do" before "we will listen." But first a few words of introduction concerning the nature of the revelation at Sinai:

A Mountain of Love

At Sinai they were under the "spell" of G-d's unprecedented revelation. Our Sages tell us that G-d covered them with the mountain and threatened to bury them if they did not accept the Torah. Chassidic thought explains that this is a metaphor for the overwhelming G-dly love that was showered upon them and which smothered them to such an extent that

they could not possibly refuse to unconditionally embrace all of the Torah. G-d's passionate love for them elicited a reciprocal feeling of love for G-d and His Torah which transcended the bounds of logic—*shetus dekudusha*-holy folly.

This clearly was not good enough. There were two dangers that had to be addressed: The first is that when the mountain (read: G-d's passionate love for them) would cease to hover over them, their enthusiasm would fizzle out. The second, and, perhaps an even greater danger, was that they might take their supra-rational love and the impulsive behavior it would engender and channel it into an irrational form of passion and so to negative impulsive behavior. They would take the *shetus dekudusha* and convert it into *shetus deklipah*-from holy folly to its negative counterpart.

To forestall these two potential problems, G-d instructs them to contribute towards the construction of the *Mishkan*. This instruction had two functions that addressed both of the concerns.

First, as stated above, it gave them an opportunity to channel their passion into concrete action so that the energy would not dissipate.

Second, it reinforced the idea that their supra-rational passion should remain above the line and not be diverted into irrational and negative impulsiveness.

Foolish Wood

Indeed, the *Mishkan* was built from *shittim* wood. The word *shittim* is related to the word *shetus*-folly. As discussed in the discourse referred to above, the reason the *Mishkan* was constructed of this material was to underscore its function and objective. It was not just a place to come and worship G-d, but a place that represented the transformation of the negative folly into *shetus dekudusha*-holy folly.

In other words, this supra-rational approach to Judaism that does not allow us to **limit** ourselves to rational modes of dedication to Torah, notwithstanding the importance Judaism places on logic, was to be

institutionalized and enshrined in the Sanctuary. It was not intended to be a onetime experience at the time we stood under the influence of the Sinai event. The building of the *Mishkan* demands that this approach become a permanent fixture which would guarantee the survival of Judaism.

Moshiach: Transcending Logic

As we prepare for the final Redemption it is necessary for us to apply the above lessons to this process. The Chassidic classic *Tanya* teaches us that the future Messianic Age is the time when the spiritual effects of the Sinai experience will become permanent and will permeate the entire world. It follows then that the lessons that applied to the giving of the Torah and the construction of the *Mishkan* must be applied to our generation which has been told by the Rebbe, "it is the last one of exile and the first of Redemption."

In recent years, due to all of the incredible changes that have occurred, both positive and negative, the Jewish people have been inspired with the realization that Moshiach's

coming is imminent. The miracles that we have witnessed have left us awestruck and profoundly moved. But all of this does not suffice. The lesson of G-d's instruction to contribute towards the construction of the *Mishkan* as a response to their saying "I will do" before "I will listen" is that we must take this inspiration and translate it into concrete action. By doing one more Mitzvah we will succeed in internalizing that inspiration, perpetuate it, and hasten the process of Redemption.

The second lesson is that we should not allow our enthusiasm to be diverted into doing things that serve our own interests that are out of the bounds of logic. Everything we do must reflect supra rational passion of our divine soul and not the egotistical, irrational desires of our animal nature. Our observance of the Mitzvos should not be confined to our limited human faculties. We must always endeavor to reveal the inner *shetus dekudusha,* the inner voice that comes from our soul's essence that inspires and enables us to go beyond our boundaries.

This has a special connection to Moshiach in consonance with *Tanya's* explanation of the enigmatic Talmudic statement that seems to suggest that Moshiach comes when we are distracted from his coming. The actual literal translation of that statement is that Moshiach's coming transcends our knowledge and goes beyond our expectations. No matter what we imagine it will be like, it will be much more than that. Moshiach will introduce us to an utterly transcendent level of G-dly awareness.

Accordingly, our preparation for this time must also involve reaching the limits of knowledge -- and then transcending it.

ESSAY THREE

THE TEMPLE "SUBSTITUTES"

Without our Bais Hamikdash today, we have three ways to recapture G-d's presence in our own lives.

Building Small Sanctuaries (Synagogues)

Learning the laws of the construction of the future Bais Hamikdash

Wearing Tefillin.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY THREE

THE TEMPLE "SUBSTITUTES"

Make for Me a Sanctuary

The Torah, first and foremost, is a Book that directs our lives. The Torah contains a total of 613 commandments. One of the commands in this week's parsha is particularly relevant as we approach the final days of Galus: "Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in them."

These commandments are Divine dictates. They tell us how we should live our lives; they are not just suggestions or great ideas. Yet, when we explore these 613 commandments, as enumerated by Maimonides and others, we discover that a few hundred of them are impossible to observe because we are missing the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. In these last days of exile there remain impediments for us to build the Temple.

The question thus becomes, how could it be that G-d would deny us the opportunity to perform so many of His commandants, particularly the one to build the Sanctuary?

The Synagogue Substitute

Our Sages anticipated this question and answered that, while we must pray for the imminent coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash, there are things we must do today as divinely ordained substitutes for the Temple.

Among those "substitutes" are building and supporting synagogues, which the prophet Yechezkal (11:16) characterized as miniature Sanctuaries where G-d's presence dwells. Indeed, the Talmud declares that when the Temple was destroyed, the Divine presence went with the Jewish people and "took up residence" in the synagogues of the Diaspora, particularly the main synagogue, headed by the leading Sage of his generation. Indeed, many of the laws that govern the respect we must accord the Bais Hamikdash extend to synagogues too.

Moreover, according to the Talmud all the synagogues we build in the Diaspora will become attached to the future Bais Hamikdash. They are virtual extensions of the Bais Hamikdash now and will soon become actual extensions with the revelation of Moshiach.

The Rebbe extended this mandate to build synagogues as replacements for the Bais Hamikdash to the next level to include our own homes. Whenever we make our homes places whose residents pray, study Torah and engage in acts of loving-kindness, each home becomes a veritable miniature Bais Hamikdash and will be transported to Israel in the Messianic Age.

Study the Laws

Another way we can replicate the spiritual effects of the Bais Hamikdash, even as we wait for the literal return of that edifice, is the study of the laws concerning the Holy Temple.

The Midrash Tanchuma recounts that G-d instructed the prophet Yechezkal to study the

details of the construction of the Bais Hamikdash. Yechezkal protested,

> "We are now in exile, in the land of our enemy, and You tell me to notify the Jewish people about the dimensions of the Sanctuary... do they have the ability to do anything. Take them out of exile and then I shall inform them!"

G-d's response to Yechezkal was:

> "If My children are in exile shall the construction of My house cease?... Reading about its construction is as significant as actually building it. Go tell them to read the dimensions of the Sanctuary, and as a reward for reading about it I will consider it as if they were actually engaged in its construction."

This Midrashic approach is based on the premise that Torah study transcends the constraints of time and space. The same spiritual energies that we generate during Passover, for example, can be elicited when we study the laws of Passover. Learning

about a Mitzvah is the equivalent of doing the Mitzvah.

Based on the above, the Rebbe asserts that the way we fulfill our obligation to build the Bais Hamikdash now is by learning about it.

Tefillin: our Personal Holy Temple

There is yet another Mitzvah which our Sages associate with the Bais Hamikdash: the Mitzvah of Tefillin.

The Zohar, the principle work of Kabbalah, states (1:129) that when we wear Tefillin we recreate the Sanctuary on our own bodies, and the Tefillin are analogous to the Ark, the holiest object in the Sanctuary. When G-d spoke to Moses the Torah states He spoke from "between the two Cherubim" situated on top of the Ark. Similarly, the Zohar states, the head and hand Tefillin are analogous to the two Cherubim, and become the vessel for G-d's dwelling on us.

The great Rabbi Chaim Vital, the principal expositor of the teachings of Kabbalah that he received from the Arizal, writes in his work

Etz Hada'as Tov that the relationship between Tefillin and the Sanctuary is hinted in the very command G-d used for the building of the Sanctuary:

> Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in them.

The word in Hebrew for "in them" is *bi'tocham*. This word is a composite of two words, *bitoch mem*, and means: "within the [final] mem." In Hebrew, the letter mem (the equivalent of the English letter "m") is shaped like a square when placed at the end of a word. This alludes to the square boxes of the Tefillin. When we don these square boxes we draw down the Divine presence to dwell upon us.

This, the *Shaloh* explains, is why the Torah says: "I will dwell in **them,**" using the plural form although it begins the sentence with the words "Make for Me a *Sanctuary*" in the singular. It should have ended with the words, "And I will dwell in **it**."

The answer is that the word "them" refers to the Jewish people. According to the Shaloh we create a Sanctuary within each and every

one of us specifically through the Mitzvah of Tefillin.

Mind and Heart Coordination

To better appreciate the connection of Tefillin to the Sanctuary we ought to consider the words of the Shulchan Aruch, the principal work of Jewish law, which explain the underlying idea behind the head and arm Tefillin:

> When a person puts on Tefillin he should concentrate on the idea that G-d commanded us to wear these four sections of the Torah [contained in the Tefillin] that contain G-d's unity and the Exodus from Egypt. We place them on our arms near our hearts and on our heads near our brains so that we remember the miracles and wonders He wrought for us. These reflect His unity and that He has the exclusive power in the upper and lower realms to do as He desires. One will then surrender [to Him] the soul which is seated in the brain and also the heart,

> the primary seat of desires and thoughts. This will remind him of his Creator and curb those [unbridled] desires."

The two controlling influences in our lives are our minds and hearts. The world either becomes receptive to G-d's presence or resists it depending on the degree to which both our minds and hearts are in the right place.

When Tefillin are worn they empower us to keep our mind focused on G-d's unity. They also enable us to control our heart's desires. When our mind and heart are coordinated and go in the same direction our bodies become receptive to the Divine presence.

As we alluded to earlier, the Zohar compares the two boxes (head and arm) of Tefillin to the two cherubic figures on the top of the Ark. The implication is that when we wear both boxes, on the head and on the arm, we replicate the power of the two Cherubim, which our Sages write were male and female and served as metaphors for the love of G-d for His people Israel.

When we wear the Tefillin, which coordinate our minds and our hearts, we reinforce the love affair between G-d and ourselves. G-d does not have to hide His countenance from us because we have eliminated any and all resistance to His presence. We become Sanctuaries to His presence.

Women's Participation

One can raise a simple question. If the Tefillin are a substitute for the building of the Bais Hamikdash, why are women exempted from this Mitzvah? In this week's parsha we read about the central role women played in the construction of the portable Temple, the *Mishkan*. Rambam codifies the law that women are obligated to participate in the construction of the Bais Hamikdash. Why then are they exempted from the "substitute" Mitzvah of Tefillin?

There are several answers to this question. According to the Arizal, women enjoy the spiritual benefits of Tefillin vicariously from the observance of the Mitzvah by their husbands; their other halves.

In addition, women are naturally endowed with the proper mind-heart coordination. What men need in order to attain that coordination, through the wearing of Tefillin, women can draw upon internally. Women are naturally more in touch with their inner faith and spiritual attachment to G-d. Evidence of this is the resistance of the women to the construction of the Golden Calf, the rebellion of the Spies and other debacles in the desert.

Prior to these events, when the women were still slaves in Egypt, they did not lose their faith and trust that G-d would redeem them. It was in the merit of their faith that the Jews were liberated from Egypt. When it came to the contributions for construction of the *Mishkan*, the women were first to donate, freely giving up the gold jewelry they refused to give to the Golden Calf effort.

When women focus on their G-d given spiritual sensitivity, inspire the men with faith in the imminence of the Final Redemption, perform the Mitzvos most relevant to women such as lighting Shabbos candles, maintaining the highest standards of Kashrut, following the laws of Mikveh and modesty, they

possess the inherent power of Tefillin and become Sanctuaries for G-d.

In conclusion, when we achieve all the above and construct our substitute Sanctuaries by supporting our synagogues, studying the laws of the Bais Hamikdash and wearing Tefillin, we materially hasten the time when we will see the literal fulfillment of our most fervent wish: the building of the Third and Final Bais Hamikdash!

ESSAY FOUR

THE GIFT MOSHIACH WILL NOT ACCEPT

There are many contributing factors to the building of the future Temple.
And while persecution unleashed hidden energies, the persecutors have no right to claim reward for their efforts.

ESSAY FOUR

THE GIFT MOSHIACH WILL NOT ACCEPT

Gold, Silver and Copper but not Iron

The *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary the Jewish people constructed in the desert, was constructed out of gold, silver and copper.

According to the Midrash, these metals allude to three of the four nations that subjugated the Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian monarch, dreamt of a huge statue consisting of four parts. Its head consisted of fine gold; its breast and arms were made out of silver; its belly and thighs were made out of copper, and its legs were made out of iron.

Daniel was summoned to interpret this dream. The golden head of the statue, he said, was a reference to the Babylonians; the silver breast and arms to the Medians; the

copper belly and thighs to Greece and the iron legs were a reference to the Romans.

The Midrash then observes that G-d only asked for three of those metals: gold, silver and copper for the construction of the Sanctuary, while iron, and its allusion to the Rome, was conspicuously absent. The Midrash explains:

> "Because the evil Edom (Rome), which destroyed the Holy Temple, is likened to it. And this is to teach you that the Holy One, blessed is He, will accept gifts in the Future Era from all the kingdoms, with the exception of Edom (Rome)."

The Midrash then asks:

> "But, didn't Babylonia also destroy [the First Temple]? However, she did not raze it. But with respect to Edom [Rome] what is written '…those who say Destroy! Destroy! to its very foundation' (Psalms 137:7)."

The Midrash then describes how all of the nations of the world will bring gifts to Moshiach. Moshiach will accept all of their

gifts, at which time Rome will come and argue:

> "Since they accepted gifts from these other nations, who are not their [Israel's] brothers, all the more so us. Edom [Rome] too will seek to bring gifts to the King Moshiach, but the Holy One, blessed is He, will say to the Moshiach, 'Rebuke the wild beast of the reed, (Psalm 68:31)' whose entire existence is from the reed."

Rome Built Around a Reed!

What did the Midrash mean by describing Rome as "a wild beast whose entire existence is from the reed?"

Commentators cite the Talmud and Zohar, which state that Rome was built on the foundation of a reed.

> "When King Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, the angel Gabriel came and stuck a reed in the sea, and the city of Rome was built on a sandbank that gathered around it."

This discussion raises several questions:

First, what precisely is the reason G-d did not want Moshiach to take a gift from Rome? Why wouldn't Rome's willingness to bring a gift to Moshiach mitigate their past evil?

Second, what is the connection between the Rome's unredeemable evil and King Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter?

Third, what deeper message lies beneath the surface of the description of Rome being built "around a **reed**?"

The Role of the Bais Hamikdash

To answer these questions we must first understand:

a) The role of the Bais Hamikdash

b) Why it is not standing today?

c) What will happen when Moshiach builds the Third Temple?

When G-d created the world, He not only intended for it to be civilized and peaceful; He also wanted it to be G-dly. G-d's plan was for an independent-minded humanity that

would become aware of G-d, His plan, accede to His will and permeate every aspect of existence with this G-dly awareness.

To this end, G-d gave us the Torah and its Mitzvos, which touch every aspect of our lives and instill them with G-dly light.

To further the goal of making our entire world a "dwelling place for G-d" we were given a Holy Land, a land that radiates fidelity to G-d's will. Indeed, the word *eretz*-land, our Sages tell us, is etymologically related to the word *desire.* Israel is a land that has a **natural** desire and proclivity to conform to G-d's will. (Of course, free choice enables us to suppress the land's holiness and desire.)

To further the goal of making the entire world like *Eretz Yisroel*, G-d commanded us to build a Bais Hamikdash, in which G-d's presence would be powerfully present and radiate its G-dly aura to the entire world.

Without the Temple, the only way we could affect the world in accordance with G-d's plan would be by physical proximity to the places we want to transform. If the Temple's integrity had not been compromised, there

would never have been a need for the Jewish people to go into exile. The spiritual power of the Bais Hamikdash would have spread to the entire world unimpeded. The destruction of the Temple necessitated our going into exile and having a direct connection with the world we want to affect.

Exile was therefore not just a punishment for our sins. Rather, our sins caused the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash. Without that source of Divine energy, we were compelled to descend into exile to fulfill our mission of transforming the entire world. The only way to accomplish that goal was by direct contact with each of the places to which we were exiled.

King Solomon's Plan

We can now understand King Solomon's reason for marrying Pharaoh's daughter and how it backfired.

King Solomon was well aware of his unique role in unifying the Jewish people and building the Bais Hamikdash to empower them to refine and elevate the whole world.

However, Solomon sought to buttress the process of bringing G-d's unity and light to the "outside" world by marrying women from other countries (but only after they converted to Judaism). By marrying Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon felt it would enable him to channel the powerful spiritual energy of Jerusalem to the Egyptian empire and beyond. Solomon's intentions, albeit proven wrong, were entirely positive and holy.

His mistake was that rather than augmenting and enhancing the power of the Bais Hamikdash, Solomon undermined its power.

First, the Bais Hamikdash did not need man-made support and enhancement. The very premise upon which the Temple was built was for us not to have to travel (either geographically or conceptually) to foreign states or states of mind. Marriage to Pharaoh's daughter caused Solomon to depart from and thereby diminish the unadulterated G-dly atmosphere of the Temple.

Second, the daughter's beliefs and behavior were not consistent with the high ideals of the Temple. Her lack of fidelity to the belief

in absolute Divine unity was diametrically opposite the existence of the Bais Hamikdash. Rather than increasing holiness and causing G-dly light to radiate outward, Solomon brought some of the exile darkness into Jerusalem and the Bais Hamikdash.

Undermining the Foundation

This, perhaps, is what is meant by the statement in the Talmud and Zohar that Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter created Rome. That unholy marriage undermined the very foundation of the Temple, which left us having to flounder in exile in order to reach and affect the outside world. Rome was the symbol of the destruction of the Temple, even to its very foundation. The seeds for that destruction, which brought on the long, arduous and painful exile, were sown by that marriage to Pharaoh's daughter.

That uncalled for marriage created a situation in which our power to change the world would have to be unleashed by exile, persecution and suffering.

There is no question that our stay in exile under "Roman" domination will prove to achieve even greater results than what we could have achieved without the pain.

Nevertheless, we pray and plead for the exile to end.

The Extended *Kuf* of the Reed (*Kaneh*)

The significance of the reed, *kaneh* in Hebrew, is that it begins with the letter *kuf,* which has a negative connotation. The *kuf* is similar to the letter *hei* (which is part of the Divine name), with one significant difference. Its left leg extends downward, symbolizing the descent into the lowest precincts of our world. It represents the total immersion in the material world which causes one to lose sight of the Divine and imbibe unholy and ungodly influences.

When the Temple stood, there would have been no potential for that type of decline because we would not have needed to directly relate to the "outside-nether" world. The outside world could have been made G-dly without our intense and obsessive

participation in it; there would have been no potential for drowning in the morass of exile.

When Moshiach rebuilds the Bais Hamikdash we will once more be able to radiate G-dliness to the entire world.

Rome's Intention

Thus, when Rome offers a gift to Moshiach its intention will be to demonstrate how much our existence in their exile contributed to the transformation for the world and leading it to the Messianic Age.

Rome will brag that it caused the infrastructure which enabled us to learn Torah and perform the Mitzvos. Rome, therefore will feel that, despite its evil, it deserves to be given some credit.

To use an analogy: Doctors discover and successfully treat a potentially fatal illness when a person injured in a fight goes for treatment. If not for that injury he would not have found the problem before it killed him.

It would be understandable if the victim would be grateful, at least in some small part,

to his adversary for having, albeit unintentionally, saved his life.

This is essentially Rome's argument: "True, we persecuted you, etc., however, being in our exile provided you with the opportunity to bring holiness to every nook and cranny of the world. We also provided the tools which enabled you to fulfill your mission. We have, in effect, contributed to the building of the Third Temple!"

Hypocrites!

G-d will not buy their argument. Rome not only destroyed the Temple, they targeted its very foundation and core, which forced us into exile. This is far more analogous to one who throws another into the ocean and then jumps in to save him.

Their "contributions" will therefore be deemed totally unacceptable for the building of the Third Temple.

All the credit for the Third Temple will go to the Jewish people, who suffered through exile,

persevered, flourished and brought G-dly light to the entire world.

Only they, along with those nations and individuals who observed the Seven Noahide commandments and supported the Jewish people, will have a role in the Third Temple, as the prophet Isaiah (56:7) declares:

> "...for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations."

ESSAY FIVE

HALF MEASURES (1)

While one must toil in the study of Torah, it cannot be fathomed on its own.

G-d gave us the Torah as a gift; indeed the greatest gift we have ever received.

We are reminded of this Divine gift with the Torah's description of the Ark

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY FIVE

HALF MEASURES (1)

The Enigma of the Ark

One of the most enigmatic narratives in the Torah is the one about the building of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle, or portable Sanctuary) the Jews were commanded to build in the desert. As in no other place in the Torah, the most minute details of the construction of the *Mishkan* and its vessels are presented.

Among the detailed measurements discussed in this week's Parsha, is the one concerning the Ark that contained the tablets. The Torah states that the dimensions of the ark were: "two and a half cubits (a cubit is about a foot and a half) length, one and a half cubits wide and one and a half cubit high."

Commentators note that all of the dimensions of the ark (length, width and

height) are all in halves. By contrast, none of the other vessels (the Table, Menorah, Altars) consisted of half-cubits in **all** three of their dimensions..

Inscrutible!

Perhaps, the mystery of the Half-Measures of the Ark was intended to underscore and highlight the incredible mystery of the Ark itself.

The Ark had many miraculous features. It carried those who carried it, we are told.

Moreover, our Sages tell us the ark defied nature and logic itself. While it had specific dimensions it did not occupy space in the Holy of Holies.

In addition, the Tablets contained in the Ark also possessed miraculous and nature defying properties.

To remind us that this Ark and its contents were beyond nature, it was designed to half measures, as a way of indicating its inscrutable character.

Symbol of Humility

Commentators explain that the Ark that contained the *Luchos*, the Two Tablets represents the study of Torah and the half-cubit measure is a symbol of the humility one must possess when it comes to the study of Torah. By giving us half measures, we are to realize that when it comes to the acquisition of Torah wisdom, we should always recognize that we are deficient and we need to learn more.

Commentators then ask, why is there a need to have all three dimensions consist of a half-cubit?

The answer based on *Kli Yakar* (a 17th century Biblical commentator) with additional elucidation based on Chassidic thought, is that there are three dimensions of Torah knowledge that parallel the three physical dimensions: length, breadth and depth. And all of these three areas of knowledge are partly accessible and partly elusive

There are subjects that are utterly beyond our ability to fathom. They are so deep as to

render them inaccessible. By stating that the Ark was "one and **a half** cubit high," the Torah thereby informs us that there is an inherent limitation to our ability to plumb the depths of Torah knowledge. Torah — particularly the mystical teachings of Torah — are unadulterated Divine wisdom. By definition, this body of knowledge should be unfathomable to even the greatest mind.

The Gift of Torah

G-d, in His infinite kindness, had to give us the Torah. This means that He gave us the ability to grasp the Divine teachings within our finite minds. This is what is meant when the act of giving the Torah is likened by our Sages to a gift. If not for G-d granting us the gift of the knowledge of Torah, No human mind could have "purchased" it with all the intellectual "capital" in the world.

To ensure that we never forget that our comprehension of the Torah is limited, the height of the ark was a cubit and **a half**, to suggest that while we **can** grasp Torah

because G-d allowed us to catch a glimpse of it, the inner depths of Torah is inherently beyond us.

Breadth of Torah

Then, there is the breadth of Torah. Not only is our ability to fathom the mysteries of Torah limited, even our ability to master all of the subjects of the Torah is likewise limited. By definition, Torah is more than just the Five Books of Moses, Prophets, Talmud, etc. Every novel interpretation thought of by a contemporary scholar, every imaginable insight that one can perceive, is all a part of Torah.

In the words of the Jerusalem Talmud: "Whatever novel idea any worthy student shall introduce, has already been given to Moses at Sinai." Hence, contrary to what some might think, the breadth of Torah is infinite. Here too, the dimension includes a half-cubit, to underscore that mastering the breadth of Torah in its entirety, is an elusive goal.

Length of Torah

There is then a third aspect of Torah knowledge that parallels the **length** of the ark. This is our ability to extend an idea from one person to another, or from one level of comprehension to another. When a teacher wishes to impart his knowledge to his students, there is a certain process of translation or adaptation. The teacher must find a suitable analogy or parable that will help simplify the concept that would otherwise confound the student. In the process of "bringing the knowledge down" to the student, the teacher follows the physical dimension of length.

But, the student must always realize that notwithstanding his or her ability to grasp the analogy and its analogue, something gets lost in the translation. One must always therefore seek to return to the teacher to retrieve some off the knowledge that was lost in the process of communication. Without constant study and returning to the sources of knowledge, one will always have but a half a measure of knowledge.

While our ability to fathom the depths of Torah knowledge, master its breadth and be capable of communicating of it to others is intrinsically compromised, that will change with the coming of Moshiach, In the concluding paragraph of the Mishneh Torah: Maimonides writes,

> In that era, the preoccupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d. The Israelites, therefore, will be great sages and know the hidden matters, and they will attain knowledge of their Creator to the extent of human capacity, as it is said, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the water covers the sea.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY SIX

HALF MEASURES (2)

Knowledge comes in three dimensions:

Depth, breadth and Length.

Our knowledge of Torah is incomplete in all three dimensions.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY SIX

HALF MEASURES (2)

Studying Torah with Humility

The single most holy and remarkable object to have ever existed was undoubtedly the Holy Ark that was built to house the Tablets, the precise dimensions of which are given in this week's parsha:

> And they shall make an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits in its length, a cubit and a half in its width, and a cubit and a half in its height.

Commentators take note of the fact that **all** of the three dimensions (length, width and height) of the Ark included a half measure, unlike other components of the Sanctuary such as the Table and Altar.

Kli Yakar explains that the Ark that symbolizes the Torah must be studied with

humility. One must always know that as much as one can understand there is so much more that is elusive. One never learns everything. As much as we can know there are always greater heights to scale.

All the Measures Half

But, the question still remains: Why do all of the dimensions of the Ark have to be half measures? Wouldn't it suffice if one of the dimensions included a half cubit? That too would have possessed the symbolism of incompletion.

Kli Yakar explains that there are three reasons why one cannot fathom all of that there is to know in Torah:

Three Dimensions of Knowledge

First there is the limited nature of our minds, which Kli Yakar associates with width; our minds are not "broad" enough to contain the knowledge of the Torah.

Second there is the depth of the subject. This, the Kli Yakar states corresponds to the height or depth of the Ark.

Thirdly, there is the sheer volume (length) of knowledge.

Depth

Another way of understanding the three dimensions of the Ark and how they relate to the elusive nature of Torah is that there are three dimensions of knowledge:

The first is the depth of the subject. Every subject can be understood on the surface level and on a deeper level. But, Torah's depth is unfathomable since it is G-dly knowledge there is no limit to the depths we can go. As soon as we think we've uncovered a hidden meaning in the text of the Torah, we discover that there is yet a deeper level. The deeper we plumb the secrets of Torah, the deeper and more elusive it becomes.

Breadth

In addition to the depth within each part of Torah, Torah itself has a revealed and a hidden, esoteric part of Torah. The Zohar refers to the secrets of Torah and the "secrets of secrets."

Torah also has incredible breadth. This involves the extensive details of each and every aspect of Torah. In addition, each subject can be explained in so many diverse ways. Our Sages say that there are "seventy faces" or perspectives to the Torah.

The great Kabbalist, the Ari, stated that there are 600,000 different approaches to each part of Torah that corresponds to the 600,000 root souls of the Jewish nation; the number of adult men that left Egypt at the time of the Exodus. One can appreciate Torah from every angle and from all perspectives. The more approaches we discover the more seem to appear.

Length

Torah also has length; its ability to reach the farthest areas. The length of Torah relates to its ability to be transmitted to each and every

Jew. No matter how abstruse or deep a part of Torah may be it can be "brought down" into the minds of each and every Jew regardless of their level of knowledge and commitment to Judaism. Just as no Jew, no matter how brilliant, can fathom the depth of Torah; no Jew is out of reach of the Torah. Torah is accessible to every Jew no matter how simple or detached from its knowledge he or she may be.

In historical terms it means that the same Torah that was given to us over 3,000 years ago has been successfully transmitted down the generations and has reached us. And no matter how far we think we may be from the original transmission of the Torah at Sinai, the Torah will reach and resonate with us.

Indeed, the Kabbalists tell us the Torah has "traveled" from its glorious place in the highest of the heavenly spheres—from the essence of G-d's wisdom that transcends the entire order of creation—down through the various spiritual worlds, until it makes its appearance in this physical world of ours.

We cannot possibly fathom how the Torah that is Divine wisdom can enter our puny minds and be grasped by us. It is beyond our ability to comprehend how Torah—which is Divine wisdom—can possibly enter our finite minds. But it does. And when it does it is the same Divine wisdom that enters our consciousness. Torah has incredible reach.

In summary, there are three aspects of Torah that are unparalleled: Its depth, its breadth and its length. In order that we don't think of Torah as we do of other intellectual disciplines, the Torah tells us that all three of the dimensions of the Ark included half cubits; we cannot fathom Torah in each of these three areas.

But Torah itself can be divided into different levels; wherein one level is wondrous and elusive even when comparing it to other levels of Torah itself.

The Revealed and Secret Parts of Torah

In general terms, the Torah has been divided into the two dimensions of the "revealed" and the "esoteric." Whatever limits we have on

our access to the revealed parts of Torah in terms of depth, breadth and length, they pale in comparison to our ability to grasp the esoteric and mystical teachings of the Torah.

Torah of the Future

But even the esoteric discipline of Torah that we have now cannot compare with the teachings of Torah to be revealed in the future. Our Sages tell us that the Torah we study now is "vanity" relative to the Torah that will be revealed by Moshiach in the Messianic Age. What appears to us as deep, broad and lengthy now is nothing compared to the depth, breadth and length of the future exposure to Torah.

Moshiach, we are taught, will teach Torah to all of the Jewish people; from the simplest to Moses. Obviously, Moshiach will reveal new and deeper layers of meaning that were not even revealed to Moses. The prophet Isaiah refers to these deeper layers of meaning when he speaks of a "new Torah will emerge from G-d." This does not mean, G-d forbid, that the Torah will be replaced or changed. It means that there will be new vistas of Torah

knowledge that were heretofore beyond any human being's reach.

Likewise with regard to breadth.

In the Messianic Era we will be able to know infinitely more details of Torah; our mind's ability to absorb will be greatly enhanced. This is can be attributed to at least two factors:

First, there will be no more forgetfulness. Forgetfulness, Kabbalah teaches us, comes from the "animal" soul that is resistant to the G-dly knowledge of Torah. The more our animal soul is refined and allows the light of the G-dly soul to shine through it, the less obstructive it is to the retention of G-dly knowledge. Thus, in the Messianic Age, when "the spirit of impurity will be removed from the land," we will be able to retain infinitely more information than we can retain now. Much more will therefore be revealed to us.

Technology: A Taste of the Future

Even today as we stand on the cusp of the Messianic Age, we are witness to the

phenomenon of computers that can store incredible amounts of information. And the sophisticated search engines we have enable us to access this information almost instantaneously. This is a fitting metaphor for the way in which knowledge will be accessed and stored in our minds in the future.

Second, the manner in which Torah will be taught will be through the medium of vision. Moshiach will present us with the knowledge of Torah visually. While it may take hours and even days to digest huge amounts of data, when one sees the knowledge they can get a panoramic view of the Torah.

This is akin to the story of the Ari who took a short nap one Shabbat afternoon, When he awakened he told his disciples that what he "saw" in his dream was an exposition of the deeper meanings of the section of the Torah that discussed Balak and Bilam. If he would try to transmit all that he had experienced in that dream it would take him 60 to 80 years! One glimpse of an intricate piece of art can take countless hours to explain.

In addition to the new unfathomable layers of meaning that will be revealed in the Messianic Age, Torah will also become even more accessible to everyone. Even the simplest of people will be able to gaze at the visual presentation of Torah no less so than the greatest scholar. The Torah we will behold will not only be deeper and broader, it will also be "longer." It will reach out and down to touch every individual no matter who they are and in what mental and spiritual state they are. No matter how little one knows and no matter how limited our capacity to learn may be, we will all be able to appreciate the depth and breadth of Torah knowledge that we will hear and see imparted to us by Moshiach himself.

The purpose of knowing that the Torah is so deep, vast and far reaching is to whet our appetite to want to study Torah. The more we appreciate the elusiveness and mystique of Torah the more it entices us to seek its knowledge much like the desire we have as humans to explore the unknown.

And it is through Torah study now—within the constraints and impediments we have

presently—that we will be prepared to partake of the sumptuous Torah feast that we will enjoy at Moshiach's table.

ESSAY SEVEN

A HOUSE OF UNITY AND LOVE

The greatest challenge is not just unity and love.

It is achieving unity within diversity.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY SEVEN

A HOUSE OF UNITY AND LOVE

The *Mishkan* and the Shema

This week's parsha, Terumah, opens with the command to collect contributions of the Jewish people for the purpose of constructing the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary in the desert. According to Rashi there were thirteen different items that were donated.

On the opening words of this week's parsha, "And they shall take unto me an offering" the Midrash cryptically comments:

> This is the meaning of "Hear o Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is one."

What connection does the Shema have with the contributions for the construction of the Tabernacle?

The Significance of 13

As mentioned, Rashi states there were thirteen items contributed for the *Mishkan*. The fact that Rashi specifies the number thirteen suggests that there is some significance to that fact that there were thirteen items—not twelve and not fourteen. It is not some arbitrary piece of information. The *Mishkan* had to be constructed from no more and no less than thirteen items.

If every detail of the Torah is precise, certainly a detail that concerns the most important structure, the *Mishkan*, about which the Torah declares that it would bring G-d's presence to dwell within the Jewish community.

Moreover, the *Mishkan*'s construction was G-d's way of telling the Jewish people that the sin of constructing the golden calf was forgiven. Its construction is deemed so important that the most minute details are mentioned; many of which several times.

It is therefore clear that every minute detail that surrounded the contributions for the building of the *Mishkan* is endowed with meaning. What then is the significance that

there were thirteen items donated to this building project?

The number thirteen is a significant number. The most famous theme associated with the number thirteen is the "thirteen Divine attributes of mercy." In addition, the number thirteen represents the twin ideals of love and unity. The Hebrew words for love and unity are Ahavah and Echad, respectively. Each of these words has the numerical value of thirteen.

13 = Love and Unity

At this point we can ask, what does the number thirteen have to do with love and unity?

The answer can be found in the narrative concerning Jacob's last will and testament to his twelve sons. As he was about to reveal to them what will happen in the end of days, the Shechinah-Divine presence left him. At that point, he suspected that perhaps their faith in the unity of G-d had been compromised. When the sons of Jacob realized what they were suspected of, they

said to their father: "Hear O Israel (Jacob's other name was Israel), G-d is our G-d, G-d is one. Just as you have only one in your heart, so too, we have only one in our hearts."

The question can be raised, how could Jacob possibly suspect his sons that they harbored a belief in more than one G-d?

Integrating Unity

In truth, Jacob's concern was not about their fidelity to the belief in one G-d. It was about the way they integrated the notion of unity into their lives.

The twelve sons of Jacob represent the maximum number of categories within the Jewish people. Jacob was concerned that their differences and the lack of love that prevailed between them, as was evidenced by the sale of Joseph by his brothers, was a sign that the awareness of the unity of G-d did not permeate their existence. As such, they were not ready for the future Redemption.

Surely, Jacob did not suspect them of being idolaters. His concern was that their belief in one G-d was not an integral part of their personalities and therefore had little effect on their own relationships.

In Jacob's mind, he had twelve sons, each with a different conception of G-d that was at variance with his brothers' conception. To Jacob that was a sign that their notion of unity was drastically different from his own.

When a person is imbued with the unity of G-d then it leads to loving G-d. And when one loves G-d, one also loves the one who G-d loves. Hence, when there is a lack of love between brothers that can be an indication that their love for G-d, which comes from a profound appreciation for G-d's unity, is lacking as well.

E Pluribus Unum

They therefore replied to their father Jacob that just as there is none other in your heart, so too is the belief in the unity of G-d complete in our hearts. They suggested that their division into twelve was not a

contradiction to their obsession with G-d's unity. And just as Jacob, who had only one heart, and therefore a singular faith in and devotion to G-d, was able to translate this unity into all the diverse aspects of his life, so too, the tribes affirmed, the unity of G-d suffused all of their variegated "hearts."

We can now understand the significance of the number thirteen. Thirteen is twelve plus one. This means that while the twelve tribes were indeed diverse personalities, each with his own interests and character, nevertheless, they also had One above them; the number thirteen that unified them and generated love between them.

This explains why the number thirteen is the numerical equivalent of the words for love and unity. The number thirteen expresses the ideal of unity within diversity. Despite the diffusion into twelve disparate directions, there is a unity that transcends them and guides them without compromising the legitimate and desirable differences.

We can now understand why there were thirteen items specifically that were used for the construction of the *Mishkan*.

Objective of *Mishkan*

The purpose of the *Mishkan* was to enable the people to experience the unity of G-d, and the love that that experience of unity engenders. The *Mishkan*, a project of the entire Jewish nation, was intended to instill the unity within the diversity of the twelve tribes.

We can now also grasp the meaning of the Midrashic citation of the Shema in conjunction with the contribution of the thirteen items for the construction of the *Mishkan*.

The *Mishkan* was a physical expression of the Shema. The unity of G-d, and the command to love Him, and its corollary, the unity and love of the Jewish people, was manifested in the *Mishkan*. Indeed, even the thirteen items that were contributed for the *Mishkan* symbolized this concept of unity, even as it

did not exclude the diverse interests of each of the twelve tribes.

Israel Divided into Thirteen Parts

The Talmud, basing itself on Biblical verses from the book of Ezekiel, states that in the Messianic Age the Land of Israel will be divided into thirteen tribes. The thirteenth section will go to Moshiach.

In light of the above analysis, it can be explained that in the Messianic Age, the significance of the number thirteen will be magnified. The Messianic Age is not just a utopia. It is the time when the unity of G-d and the unity of the Jewish people will reach its apex. Then we will clearly see how the thirteenth level is a part of the other twelve levels.

ESSAY EIGHT

RECAPTURING OUR INNOCENCE

Our goal as adults is to return to and recapture our inner child.

This is indispensable for proper Torah study.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY EIGHT

RECAPTURING OUR INNOCENCE

Fixated on the Details

In this week's parsha we read of the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary in the desert; the place that G-d said will be where He would dwell amongst the people. In other words, the *Mishkan*—and later the Beit Hamikdash—the Holy Temple in Jerusalem—is the place that G-d chose through which He reveals Himself to the world.

Of all the components of the *Mishkan*, the most significant one was the Aron-the Ark that contained the Tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were engraved. It was from this Ark that G-d's "voice" emerged when communicating with Moses.

The Ark was a rectangular box with a golden cover called a "Kapores." On the Kapores were two cherubic figures made out of gold. The Torah stresses that these two Keruvim were to be hammered out at the two ends of the cover. The Torah informs us that G-d's voice would actually emerge from between these two cherubic figures.

What was the reason the Torah devotes such attention to the cover of the Ark? And what was the significance of having the two cherubic figures on the two extremities of the cover, from which the Divine message emanated?

The Challenge of Torah Study

The Chassidic classic Ma'or Vashemesh explains that the word Kapores is related to the Hebrew word Kapparah, which means atonement. Torah study is unlike any other discipline. It requires more than just using our brain. It requires that our heart and soul are also invested in the study of Torah. Torah is not human intellect; it is Divine knowledge presented by G-d in a way that even a mortal

can fathom its Divine truths. Thus, while it is true that to access the intellectual aspect of Torah one must use their mind, to access the Divine dimension of Torah one must use their untainted soul.

Pre-Natal Torah Study

Before we are born, the Talmud tells us, we are taught the entire Torah. Only at birth are we made to forget it so that we can invest our own effort in the study of Torah. If we would not forget the Torah, and attempt to master it anew, there would be no value in its study.

But the question that has been asked is if we are destined to forget the Torah anyhow, what was the purpose in being taught the Torah in the first place?

One answer is that there is an aspect of Torah that cannot be grasped with human effort alone. The spiritual light that derives from the Divine origin and is embedded in the Torah cannot be accessed by the intellect alone. One requires a far more sophisticated and sensitive tool to uncover its secrets. Once

we are born and subjected to the vulgarities and vagaries of life in the physical world we will be ill equipped to penetrate the Torah's inner sanctum. Thus, prior to the time we are ready to leave the protected environment of our mother's womb, we are given a crash course in Torah that is not in any way sullied by the external environment we will enter after birth. Once we get that first exposure to the Divine essence of Torah in utero we are empowered to reclaim it later in life when we apply our minds and hearts to the Torah.

In other words, to fathom the inner soul of Torah requires the innocence of a child in its mother's womb untainted by the outside world. And even after we are born, the Talmud tells us, the study of Torah by little children possesses a level of purity and innocence that cannot be matched by even the greatest adult sage.

The Talmud states: "The world exists on the merit of the breath of school children." And when a leading Sage raised the question: "And what about our learning of Torah?" he was told: "One cannot compare the breath that is devoid of sin to the breath that is

tainted by sin." In other words, only the purity and innocence of a child can capture the Divine purity contained within the Torah that is the force that keeps the world going.

Now, despite the fact that we have already been exposed to and absorbed the Divinity of the Torah before birth, it is crucial that we begin every day with a fresh attempt at connecting to the childlike innocence and purity we had before we were born.

Total Immersion

This explains he Chassidic custom of immersion in a Mikveh, a ritual body of water that is connected to a natural source of water, either a spring or rain water. In the Chassidic community it is customary to immerse oneself in a Mikveh every morning—or as often as possible—before reciting the daily Morning Prayers. One aspect of this immersion is that it is a reminder of the amniotic fluid that sheltered us from the outside world in our mother's womb. It introduces us once again to the pure and holy environment of the soul.

A more universal form of preparation for the proper study of Torah are the blessings we recite in the morning thanking G-d for continuously revealing Himself to us through His Torah. These blessings serve as the reminder that Torah is not just an intellectual exercise but an exposure to the Divine.

Prayer Before Bedtime

There is also a third form of preparation we make for the proper approach to Torah study. It is the cathartic prayer we recite before retiring to bed at which time we reflect on the past days misdeeds and disentangle ourselves from them. According to our tradition, if we retire to bed with the proper attitude, our souls "travel" to paradise where it absorbs the Divine teachings of Torah—a nostalgic reminder of the days when our souls were being readied t enter this world.

The Cover of the Ark: The cover of Inocence

This then is the significance of the cover of the Ark—the Kapores.

In order to access the Torah within, one needs to be cleansed—as the Ma'or Hashemesh commentary, cited earlier translates the word Kapores as atonement, or, more precisely, cleansing—of the things that cloud our soul's ability to touch the Divine element of Torah.

We can now also understand why the Ark needed a cover that had the images of children on it. For us to appreciate where we have to go in order to be cleansed we must be reminded of the innocent nature of children and their level of Torah study. We must disentangle ourselves from the conventions of life that make our lives complicated and gloomy. We must search recapture our innocence.

The Children Moshiachs

Our Sages tell us that the verse in Psalms that says "Do not harm my anointed ones-Meshichai" is a reference to the little children who study Torah with purity and innocence.

This tells us something about the Messianic Age that it will be a time when we will return to our original innocence.

Thus the Messianic Age is when the Moshiach—the Jewish leader who will usher in the Messianic Age—will expose us to heretofore hidden levels of Torah. Only when the world will experience this heightened state of purity and innocence we will all be able to fathom these deep secrets.

ESSAY NINE

THE MIDDLE BAR

Balance is not wishy-washy; indeed it is known as *Tiferes*-beauty.

It is the ability to go to different extremes or to fuse them when appropriate .

The ultimate balance we get is from Torah.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY NINE

THE MIDDLE BAR

Keeping the Boards Together

This week's parsha – Terumah – discusses, in vivid detail, the manner in which the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary, was to be built by the Jewish people in the desert.

The *Mishkan* was to be constructed by placing huge vertical beams made of acacia wood alongside each other. To keep them together they were to be placed into silver sockets. In addition to the silver sockets they were commanded to make five crossbars of acacia wood for each side of the *Mishkan*. These five crossbars were configured so that there were two crossbars on the outside of the beams on top, two on the outside of the beams on the bottom and the fifth "middle

bar goes inside the beams and extends from one end to the other end."

Two Categories of Bars

From this description we gather that the middle bar differed from the upper and lower ones in two ways:

First, the upper and lower bars were divided into two sections, each one reaching half way across the wall, whereas the middle one extended the entire length of the wall.

Second, the upper and lower bars were fastened to the outside of the upright beams by inserting them through rings that were attached to the beams. The middle crossbar, by contrast, was placed into the beams themselves; holding them together from within.

Our Sages taught us that the *Mishkan* – though an actual physical structure built by the Jewish people in the desert some 3,300 years ago and was used as their Sanctuary for centuries until the Temple was built by King Solomon in Jerusalem – paralleled the

internal spiritual Sanctuary that we are required to build within our own homes and lives. As such, all the details of the *Mishkan* can be applied to our own lives; showing us how to succeed in transforming our own lives, and making our own bodies a hospitable place for G-d.

What lessons can we derive from the abovementioned configuration of the *Mishkan*'s sockets and crossbars?

Three Kinds of Support: Sockets, External and Internal Crossbars

First, we see that in order for our internal Sanctuary to be stable it must be held together by three forms of support: sockets, external crossbars and internal crossbars.

The sockets represent our foundation. A person cannot just proceed to build a Sanctuary without having a proper foundation. And that foundation, our Chassidic masters based on earlier sources have taught us is *Kabbalat Ol*, which translates as: "Accepting the yoke."

A Jew cannot expect his or her Sanctuary to stand based solely and primarily on logic or feelings.

To be sure, Judaism does not disparage the role of logic and feelings, on the contrary, as we shall soon see. Nevertheless our feelings are fickle and our logic can be held hostage to these unreliable emotions.

It is therefore imperative that we have the foundation of faith and its corollary: unconditional acceptance of G-d's commandments.

But, a foundation is not enough to keep a structure intact. There is a need to have the crossbars to keep the beams together. The three layers of crossbars are said to correspond to the three Patriarchs, whose personalities and spiritual makeup reflected the three attributes of *chesed, gevurah* and *tiferes*. Chesed is kindness or love. Abraham personified love and kindness. Gevurah is the trait of judgment, reverence, awe and self-refinement; a trait that is ascribed to Isaac.

To help maintain the stability of our *Mishkan*, we must access these two traits of love and

awe of G-d. We cannot simply rely on the performance of the Mitzvot simply because G-d commanded us to do so. There are three very good reasons for this assertion:

First, without the feelings of love of and reverence for the Commander of the Mitzvot, there is a danger that our commitment to their observance might suffer with the passage of time. When we arouse the feelings of love and awe in our service to G-d it encourages us to want to do more.

Second, without the emotions of love and awe, our observances though valid are bereft of their soul. They are lacking the involvement of an integral part of our personality.

Third, the developments of the feelings of love and awe that accompany the performance of the Mitzvot are themselves mandated by G-d. The Torah has commanded us: "You shall love your G-d" and, "G-d you shall fear (the Hebrew word "*yirah*" can be translated multiple ways: fear, awe, reverence etc.)." It is not only a more enhanced – and therefore optional – way of doing a Mitzvah;

it is as much an obligation as doing the Mitzvah itself.

But even having succeeded in generating love and deep respect for G-d – represented by the two external crossbars – it does not suffice to keep the structure of one's personal Sanctuary intact. One must also have the middle, internal crossbar that corresponds to the trait personified by Jacob: *Tiferes*, which is translated as beauty or harmony, and refers specifically to the traits of compassion and truth.

The Uniqueness of Tiferes: Balance

To understand the meaning of *tiferes* and how it is the most vital unifying force in our personal *Mishkan*, it is important that we analyze this attribute and contrast it with chesed and gevurah.

Chesed, while a noble and crucial trait, has its limits. There are times when chesed in certainly not called for. Giving a drink to an alcoholic is not a good thing even if one does so out of a sense of kindness and love. Likewise, too much discipline and judgment

can become harmful and even destructive. A person is in need of a proper balance in one's emotions.

The trait of tiferes, is identified as a beautiful trait because it is the expression of a well-balanced symphony of emotions synthesized by a master conductor. This form of balance is evident in the trait of compassion, which is not unbridled love and kindness (which can be destructive), and it certainly is not harsh judgment and discipline (which can backfire and cause the recipient of the punishment to become even more recalcitrant).

Compassion, by contrast, takes the need to judge and discipline those whose behavior warrants it, however, the compassionate person will know how to temper that sense of justice with kindness, so that both ends are served. In the case of the first offense of a criminal, compassion in sentencing will show kindness to the criminal without the criminal failing to appreciate that he was in need of changing his ways.

From this analysis we can appreciate the qualitative difference between chesed and

gevurah on the one hand and *tiferes* on the other.

The Limitations of Chesed and Gevurah

Chesed and gevurah are inherently limited. To take chesed too far is too distort its benefit and is countered by the trait of gevurah. Likewise, gevurah has its limits and is countered by the demands of chesed.

Tiferes, by contrast, is characterized by a perfect harmony between chesed and gevurah. It is therefore impossible to distort or pervert *tiferes*, for once you change it is ceases to be *tiferes*; a perfectly harmonious situation. And since *tiferes* is the perfect balance between chesed and gevurah, neither chesed or gevurah is a counterforce to it.

Hence, *tiferes* is also associated with the trait of truth (referred to in Hebrew as *emes*). Emes is not simply the opposite of falsehood; it is the symbol of consistency; a force that has no end and nothing that could compromise its character.

We can now understand why the third crossbar was not broken into two parts as were the upper and lower ones. Breaking the crossbars that represented the traits of chesed and gevurah is suggestive of the inherent limits they possess. They can be extended so far and then they cease. *Tiferes*, which has no such limits, was able to extend from one end of the wall to the other without any interruption. It is interminable.

It is no wonder that the Talmud states that Jacob never really died. His immortality, as opposed to Abraham and Isaac and other righteous people, derived from his spiritual association with the attribute of *tiferes*. Since *tiferes* has no limits and "adversaries" that can weaken it, there is nothing that can stop it.

Where does *tiferes* get its power to fuse two opposite traits of chesed and gevurah endowing it with the seal of emes and immortality?

The answer provided in Kabbalah and Chassidic literature is that it is rooted in a much higher and transcendent aspect of the

soul; it is associated with the soul's inner core. Hence, this crossbar was within the walls of the *Mishkan*; it represents a more internal aspect of our lives and accomplishments than the more peripheral traits of chesed and gevurah.

The trait of *tiferes* is also associated with the study of Torah because Torah is a composite of both chesed and gevurah; it is Biblically likened to the flow of water (a symbol of chesed) and fire (a symbol of gevurah). Torah has the capacity to harmonize disparate forces and directions. It is the ultimate synthesizer.

Preparing for Moshiach with *Tiferes*

The Messianic Age is when the most transcendent forces will be internalized within our lives. Moreover, all the spiritual forces of the world, which are presently fragmented and the cause of strife and disharmony, will then be unified.

What do we have to do to make this process occur and to be prepared for it?

The answer is the study of Torah, particularly, the parts of Torah that deal with Redemption and the Moshiach. The reason why this is so is based on the above analysis of Torah as the consummate unifier.

Since Torah is *tiferes*, it assists us in striking the right balance in our lives and thereby synthesizing the "high" and the "low" as well as the right (chesed) and left (gevurah). The study of Torah gives us a taste of this sublime experience that we will realize with the imminent coming of Moshiach

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TEN

CONSTRUCTING A TEMPLE IN ONE'S HEART

G-d works with the system of reciprocation.

When we had the Bais Hamikdash in Jerusalem it inspired us to create a Sanctuary in our own hearts.

Conversely, when we create the internal Sanctuary, it generates the cosmic energy that facilitates the building of the Third Temple

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TEN

CONSTRUCTING A TEMPLE IN ONE'S HEART

Build Your Own Sanctuary!

This week's Torah portion *Terumah* features the commandment to build a sanctuary for G-d. This sanctuary the Jews built in the desert was known as the *Mishkan*, while the Temple they later built in Jerusalem is called the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Our sages noted the manner in which the Torah commanded them to build this sanctuary:

> And they shall build for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell within *them*.

Commentators point out the obvious anomaly in this verse. If G-d asked them to build Him a sanctuary so that He, G-d, could dwell in it, it should have used the singular expression

"in it." Why does the Torah employ the plural form "in them?"

Our sages answer that the mitzvah to build a sanctuary goes beyond the construction of the physical Sanctuary in the desert and the Temple in Jerusalem. In this verse, G-d has instructed the Jewish people to build a sanctuary within each and every one of them. By emulating the service in the Temple, we can bring G-d's presence into our own hearts and minds.

Why the Need for a Sanctuary of Gold and Silver?

This explanation, however, begs the question: If each and every one of us has the capacity to create his or her own personal sanctuary, why did the Jews have to build a Temple out of stone and gold? Why do we pray three times a day for the restoration of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, if every one of us can have his/her own Temple?

The answer lies in a better understanding of the function of the Temple in Jerusalem (and the *Mishkan* in the desert).

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

One of the primary services in the Temple was the offering of sacrifices. In Hebrew, the word for this offering is *korban,* the root of which does not mean sacrifice but to get close. When this service was performed in the Temple it had an effect on the entire world. Every *korban,* comprised representations of all aspects of creation: an animal, plant, mineral as well as the human Kohein-Priest who offered it – brought the whole world closer to G-d.

By contrast, when we emulate the process of the *korban* in our own lives and bring ourselves closer to G-d, we can only affect ourselves. And though no effort – no matter how small – should be undervalued, our individual *korban* cannot match the universal and cosmic effects the service in the Temple – G-d had chosen – had.

Moreover, the services in the physical Temple generated spiritual inspiration that empowered us to create their own individual Sanctuary.

In truth, it also goes in the other direction. The more we endeavor to create a Sanctuary

for G-d in our own minds, hearts and bodies, the closer we get to the construction of the Third Bais Hamikdash.

In matters of spirituality, whatever affects the macro world also affects the micro world and vice versa.

In the absence of the Temple, we have no choice and must try to compensate for its loss by doing all we can to make our own lives more pure, holy and G-dly.

No Need to Find Substitutes for the Temple

We have been assured by our prophets and sages that through all of our individual efforts, we will finally bring about the realization of the hopes and dreams of millennia of Jews. We will finally see the rebuilding of the third Temple in Jerusalem, which will enhance our own individual efforts at bringing ourselves and the entire world closer to G-d. In a world imbued with the spirit of G-d, we will experience true peace and harmony.

ESSAY ELEVEN

FALSEHOOD AND BOARDS

Everyone aspires for truth. Yet it is so elusive because of the obfuscating nature of our physical world.

To break out of falsehood we must use the instruments of utter truth.

These instruments are the G-dly commandments, which represent objective Divine truth.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY ELEVEN

FALSEHOOD AND BOARDS

Divine Providence on Every Detail

The *Mishkan*, the portable temple the Jews constructed in the desert was made of boards. These boards were known as *Kerashim*, or *keresh* in the singular.

One of the central teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement, was that there are no coincidences in our world. Everything, literally, everything that occurs, the Ba'al Shem Tov stated, happens by Divine providence. Nothing happens without a purpose.

If there is precision in everything that occurs within the physical world, there is certainly more precision and purpose with everything that occurs in the Torah. Certainly a detail concerning the *Mishkan*, G-d's sanctuary, was

significant and conveys an important lesson for all times.

Turning Falsehood into Truths

The Hebrew word keresh, rearranged reads: *sheker*, falsehood.

The obvious lesson to be derived from the use of the keresh for the structure of the Mishkan, is that one must transform falsehood into truth. This means that we must take something negative, a falsehood, rearrange it, reconstruct it and elevate it to the point that it can be used for the ultimate truth and reality - the making of a sanctuary for G-d.

Defining Falsehood Truthfully

What does this mean? How do we take falsehood and turn it into truth?

The answer lies in a better, more authentic definition of falsehood. Falsehood does not necessarily imply a lie. Rather anything that lacks consistency is sheker. For something to

be regarded as *emes*, which we generally render as truth, it must be consistent from the beginning through the middle to the end.

Indeed, the Jerusalem Talmud points out that the Hebrew letters of the word emes are the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This informs us of the true nature of truth. Anything that falls short of this definition of *emes*, anything that wavers is, by Torah standards, sheker.

Thus, all of our mundane activities, everything that occurs within our physical and material world, which are here today gone tomorrow, are, by definition, associated with sheker.

By contrast, the afterlife, where the soul exists outside of the body in a totally spiritual "environment," is characterized as "Olam ha'Emes," the "World of Truth." It is so called, because in a spiritual existence, there are no inconsistencies, nothing is relative, everything is for real.

Is there Truth in this World of Falsehood?

Does this mean that we cannot rise above the sheker of this world? Do we have to wait for the afterlife to enjoy truth and an authentic existence?

This week's Torah portion tells us that, to the contrary, the very purpose of our existence here is to take the sheker of our temporal, finite world and transform it into the supports and a frame of a structure that becomes G-d's "dwelling place" on Earth - the ultimate expression of emes!

The Prvious Rebbe, in his landmark discourse, *Basi L'Gani* adds another powerful point with respect to the word *keresh.* In addition to finding the word sheker when letters are scrambled, one could also find the word *kesher,* which means "knot" or "bond."

When we transform our sheker-falsehood into a keresh-board, we create a kesher-bond with G-d, who is the epitome of truth.

The Holy Temple: Concentrated Truth

The *Mishkan*, and subsequently the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem,

were havens from the distractions of a fleeting world. These were places were one could truly feel this ultimate experience of truth. To the extent that a person lived his/her life in consonance with the message of the Temple, one was turning the sheker into a keresh, falsehood into the foundations of principle and truth and thereby forging a kesher-bond with the source of truth.

Indeed, the ultimate truth is when there is absolute harmony between the physical and spiritual realms. For as long as truth exists only in the spiritual state of the soul in the afterlife and cannot extend to the physical state of the body, it too does not constitute absolute emes.

So while the afterlife is characterized as the World-of-Truth, there is no absolute truth unless it permeates this physical world as well.

When and how can that occur?

The Truth of the Future

The answer is that it will happen in the future age of Redemption, when the spirit that permeated the *Mishkan* and Bais Hamikdash will extend to the entire world. At that point the entire world will experience the ultimate expression of truth.

And the "how?" has already been answered by thousands of years of chipping away at the outer false crust of existence through the observance of the Mitzvos, which are G-d's instruments of truth. Beneath the surface of everything is the Divine essence which is the ultimate truth.

At this time in history, we have essentially removed but the very last vestige of falsehood. With one more Mitzvah-instrument of truth, we will remove the final obstacle to the world realizing its true G-dly nature.

As we stand on the threshold of the Redemption, we should try to live our lives in a way that reflects this ultimate expression of G-dly truth. We should endeavor to create our own *Mishkan*, wherein the otherwise falsehoods of our physical existence are used

for higher purposes and are transformed into supports (Kerashim) for G-d's sanctuary in our midst. This is the way we prepare for the ultimate age when the "Truth of G-d will be forever."

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWELVE

THE REAL THING!

Our world is a world of virtual reality.

We strive for Moshiach who will restore reality.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWELVE

THE REAL THING!

Where is the Temple?

"Make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell in them," is the highlight of this week's Torah portion. With these words G-d gave the Jewish people the commandment and the privilege to create a dwelling place for the A-mighty within this physical world. In the desert the Jews built the *Mishkan*, a portable sanctuary that served as G-d's House for the 40 years they sojourned in the desert and for another 14 years that they were engaged in the conquest and division of the Land of Israel. .

Once their situation in Israel stabilized, they built a more permanent structure in the city of Shiloh. This building, made of stone walls, but covered with the fabric and leather coverings of the *Mishkan,* lasted for 369

years. When this structure was destroyed by the Philistines, they rebuilt the Temple in the city of Nob and then in Gibon. These structures lasted for a total of fifty-seven years. Then, under the direction of King Solomon the Jewish people built the first permanent structure in Jerusalem. This Temple stood for 410 years.

But, alas, this temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. Seventy years later a second Temple was built that lasted for 420 years. The total number of years that all the different Temples stood adds up to 1312. For the seventy years in between Temples and for close to 2,000 years since the destruction of the second Temple by the Romans, the Jewish people have not been able to fulfill this most fundamental mitzvah of making a sanctuary for G-d in the literal sense of the mitzvah.

Temple Substitutes

Our sages have taught, however, that there are many ways by which we can create a dwelling place for G-d as a substitute for the Temple. Our prayers, our Torah study, our

giving of charity, our building of synagogues are all substitutes for the Temple and the services conducted within the Temple. Moreover, our sages declare that each and every one of us has the capacity and obligation to make our own homes and hearts sanctuaries for G-d.

Indeed, even in the days of Solomon, the intent of the Temple was to instill the awe of and appreciation for G-d that was acquired there into one's heart, permeating one's consciousness and soul. One who visited the Temple in Jerusalem did not leave feeling that G-d was "there," in Jerusalem; he or she left with a new understanding and feeling of closeness to G-d that stayed with him or her forever.

Thus it is clear that a key component of the Temple's function – to make G-d more relevant in our day to day lives – is something we can (and must) attempt to do today as well.

Yet, notwithstanding all of the various substitutes we have for the mitzvah of building a sanctuary, Jews have never ceased

praying and yearning for the rebuilding of the Temple. in Jerusalem.

What's Wrong with the Substitutes?

Thousands of times each year we ask and implore G-d for the physical reconstruction of the Temple. Several times each day we ask G-d, "May the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days." We are not content with a spiritual rendition of the Temple; we want to see it with our eyes of flesh.

Why?

Why can't we be satisfied with a spiritual sanctuary that every one of us must build in our own heart? Why do we ask so earnestly for the physical structure if we have the presence of G-d in our hearts?

Face to Face

A simple solution to this matter can be found by way of an analogy. Picture a father and son who are separated from each other. They love each other very much and the separation

is very painful. Whenever the father would think of the times when he would play with his son, he would relive that experience and his love for his child would swell up in his heart. Similarly, when the son would reflect on the great times he had spent with his father, feelings of love and yearning would well inside of him.

Yet, warm feelings notwithstanding, it is clear that, when given the opportunity to reunite neither parent nor child would say, "Why do I need to see my father/son? I already have great memories and warm feelings for him and these prove the strength of our relationship!" Nothing can ever replace the face to face reunion of two people who love each other.

The Challenge of Virtual Reality

In our modern world of communication, with telephone television and the internet that have made it possible to be connected with anyone we want at virtually every moment, we as physical entities need to have face to face relationships where we can see one

another with our eyes of flesh.

While we can connect through Skype and other media, that is only virtual reality; and virtual reality is not reality!

One of the challenges of modern times is to sort out the difference between virtual reality and the real reality. So many of our youth have been exposed to the virtual brand and

If this is true in the physical realm, it is certainly true in the spiritual real.

We have become accustomed to relying on the substitutes for the Holy Temple, and they are great, but they're not the ultimate manifestation of G-dly reality and the total relationship we can have with G-d. For that we need the Bais Hamikdash itself!

Similarly, with all the benefits that accrue from the spiritual forms of connection with G-d and substitutes for His Temple, Jews have never been satisfied with them. We have always emphasized the centrality and importance of having the actual Temple in Jerusalem – the place where we will be able to behold G-d's presence in the most palpable way.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

GO SOUTH

Although we have two directions in life, there are times when on need not go in both directions to get the benefits of both.

Making the right turn can give us the benefits of both directions.

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY THIRTEEN

GO SOUTH

Prayer Directions

The *Mishkan* (portable Temple built by Moses in the desert — the central theme of this week's Torah portion), contained several key components. In addition to the ark that contained the tablets, the *Miishkan* also contained a Menorah (golden candelabrum) a Table (with bread on it) and a golden altar for incense.

Every detail that related to the Temple was obviously significant. Even the positioning of the objects is explained by the Talmud to be relevant.

The Menorah, which symbolized enlightenment and wisdom, was located on the south of the sanctuary. This, the Talmud states, suggests that wisdom is associated

with the south.

The Table, symbolizing material wealth and prosperity, was situated on the north side of the sanctuary. This, in turn points to the association between wealth and the north.

The Talmud therefore states:

> One who wishes to become wise should face the south. One who wants to become rich should face the north.

Rashi, explains that this is a reference to the direction one faces while one prays to G-d.

(The Talmud explains, though, that one must face the Holy Temple (east in our country) when praying. One should merely tilt his face slightly northward or southward, depending on whether one's objective is wisdom or wealth.)

What, we may ask, is so important about the physical direction we face during our prayers. And why is "north" associated with wealth, while "south" associated with wisdom?

North is Symbol of G-dly concealment

The further north we go — from the vantage point of Israel — the colder it gets because less sunlight reaches the earth. Indeed, the Hebrew word for north – *tzafon* – means "hidden" indicating that the sun is hidden.

The further south one goes, conversely, the hotter it becomes, because the sun shines more brightly there.

Our sages tell us (based on the Psalmists expression "For the sun and shield is the L-rd G-d"), that the brightness of the sun is a metaphor for the radiance of the Divine presence in this world. North and south, therefore, are representative of concealment of the Divine presence and its revelation, respectively.

When we want true wisdom, we must direct our prayers "southward," towards the goal of experiencing G-dly light. This means that our desire in prayer should be directed towards getting closer to G-d, rather than desiring G-d to do things for us. True wisdom can only be realized when a person has a close relationship with G-d. As the Psalmist states, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear [or:

reverence] of G-d." The ultimate wisdom is to be aware of our source of life and existence.

When people are obsessed with the desire to satisfy their material needs, it is an indication that they face the north, and do not have the desire to see G-d exposed and revealed. Their relationship with G-d is not to get closer to Him, but to have G-d provide for their selfish needs and wants. And although, this too, fulfills the objective of prayer, because it demonstrates one's belief that all material goods come from G-d, it does not focus on the desire to become more G-dly, the primary goal of prayer.

Having Your Cake and Eating it Too

Does that mean that one may not express desire for material matters?

If that were true then why do we ask for the material matters in our prayers?

The answer lies in the continuation of the discussion of north and south in the Talmud:

> Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: "A person should **always** face the south, because as a result of acquiring wisdom, one will also become rich."

The suggestion here is that true wealth is not necessarily associated with G-d's concealment. By heading south, by craving the light of G-dly revelation, one can also be given material wealth, because it too can be utilized for serving G-d. Indeed, the very purpose of creation is to take the material resources of this world and transform it into something holy.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi is suggesting that there is no dichotomy between G-dly revelation and material wealth. The dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual is a superficial one and is determined by one's mindset.

In reality, the closer we get to G-d, the more we can appreciate the purpose for which wealth was created.

Removal of Dichotomy in Messianic Age

When will we see the total removal of any barrier between wealth and wisdom? This will occur in the Messianic Age. In Maimonides' words, at the very end of his Mishneh Torah,

> In that time (the Messianic Age) there will be no hunger...and all delights will be as plentiful as the dust of the earth.. And the entire world's preoccupation will be to know G-d exclusively.

In the Messianic Age, the physical and material things will be seen for their true G-dly value. Physicality and spirituality will be seen as two sides of the same coin, not as opposites.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY FOURTEEN

TAKE ME, PLEASE...

A relationship can go two ways.

G-d, by giving us the Torah has also given Himself to us.

Through Torah we take G-d.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY FOURTEEN

TAKE ME, PLEASE...

Give or Take?

When the A-mighty asked for contributions for the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary in the desert, the request was phrased in a rather peculiar way. Instead of saying "Speak to the Children of Israel that they should **give** Me a contribution," it states: "Speak to the children of Israel that they will **take for** Me a contribution."

Commentators point out that in truth one does not give G-d anything to G-d, because it is all His in the first place. It is only a question as to where we place G-d's resources. We can keep them for ourselves and utilize them for our own needs, or we can "take" some of what we possess and give it away to other needy individuals and causes.

Moreover, even when we do use the G-d given resources for our own benefit, we can still "take" it "**for** G-d." This means that even when we eat, sleep, work or engage in any other "selfish" pursuit; we can do it for a higher purpose. When we are in possession of all our material, emotional and spiritual needs, we can better serve G-d by learning more Torah with greater clarity, observing the commandments with more excellence and helping others more effectively.

"By all means," G-d tells us, "take whatever you have to take in order to live and prosper," but take it with Me in mind."

Taking Me Through Torah

The "Take for Me" ideal can be understood on yet one more level. The word the Torah employs for contribution — and the name of this week's Parsha — is *Terumah*. The Midrash notes that this word is actually a composite of the word Torah and the letter *mem,* which is numerically equivalent to the number 40, alluding to the number of days Moses was on the mountain to receive the

Torah from G-d.

By employing the word *Terumah* — with its allusion to the word Torah and the process through which it was given to Moses — the Torah wishes to underscore the unparalleled character of Torah, even in comparison with other spiritual and religious functions. When one studies Torah, Divine wisdom, they actually have the ability to "take" and "capture" G-d in a way that cannot be matched even by performing a Mitzvah. As the Zohar translates the opening words of this parsha "And they shall take for Me Terumah-a contribution," in a novel way. "They will take Me by studying Torah ("Terumah=Torah *mem*, the Torah that was given in forty days).

To understand the difference between Torah study and all other spiritual pursuits, R. Schneur Zalman in his classic work Tanya explains as follows:

Torah Transcends Spirituality

Since G-d is absolutely one and indivisible, He cannot be viewed as a composite of His

attributes. In Maimonides words, "G-d and His wisdom are inseparable." Torah as the embodiment of G-d's wisdom is therefore actually one with G-d Himself. Thus, when we study Torah, and it is integrated and absorbed into our minds, while our mind is simultaneously submerged in the knowledge of Torah as we delve into the subject matter, one is totally united with G-d's wisdom, which, as stated, is inseparable from G-d Himself.

Accordingly, Torah study engenders an unparalleled measure of unity with G-d. While we can connect to G-d by performing a Mitzvah, which translates as commandment or **attachment**, we can only achieve total unity with G-d by delving into and digesting the Divine wisdom contained in Torah.

But, even this unity achieved by way of Torah study depends on the degree to which our minds are capable of truly absorbing and assimilating this knowledge. All the distractions that we experience, can compromise the degree of unity that our Torah study generates. Thus, Maimonides writes, that our prophets and Sages yearned

for the Days of Moshiach, not for political or material gain, but because it will provide us with an opportunity to study Torah unhampered. Indeed, Maimonides concludes his magnum opus with Isaiah's description of the Messianic Age as a time when all of us will be submerged in an ocean of knowledge. Only then will the highest degree of unity through Torah study be fully realized.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY FIFTEEN

TRANSPLANTING CEDARS

People have been compared to trees and righteous people to cedars in particular.

True Jewish leaders in times of exile are like cedars.

As cedars they stand proud and majestic even when in exile.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY FIFTEEN

TRANSPLANTING CEDARS

Do Boards Grow in a Desert?

When the Jewish people were told to build a *Mishkan*, a portable Sanctuary, they were commanded to build it out of wooden boards, which prompts the obvious question: Where did the Jews find such an ample supply of boards to build the *Mishkan*?

Rashi asks this very question and quotes the word of the Midrash:

> Rabbi *Tanchuma* explains: Jacob our father foresaw with Divine inspiration that the Jewish people were destined to build a *Mishkan* in the desert. When he came to Egypt, he brought cedar trees with him and transplanted them there. He subsequently commanded his children that when they will depart from Egypt they should take these cedars with them.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

One of the most important teachings of Judaism is that everything we learn about in the Torah has an eternal lesson for us. What, we are entitled to ask, is the lesson to be derived from the story of how Jacob brought trees and transplanted them in Egypt and ordered his children to carry them out of Egypt into the desert?

The Anatomy of a Desert

The desert where the Jews sojourned is symbolic of our own existence in exile, since the destruction of the Temple. While exile has also been compared to the period of Egyptian bondage, because of the suffering that punctuated our exile existence, there is a salient characteristic of exile that is best represented by the desert metaphor.

A desert is a desolate place, devoid of most life forms that can be found in other climes. In Deuteronomy, the Torah describes a desert as a place that is infested with deadly serpents and scorpions and a place that lacks water. These features serve as an analogy for the lethal negative spiritual influences that

abound in exile conditions.

To be a bit more graphic, and provide one example of the deadly nature of exile, is our society's inundation with illegal and life threatening drugs. We are also witness to a breakdown of all of the traditional moral values in so many segments—particularly among the youth—of our society..

Even life, which Judaism has always defended, placing it on a pedestal as its most cherished ideal, has been severely devalued. There is talk in some of the most elite centers of scholarship, albeit, only among a fringe, that unabashedly calls for everyone over the age of seventy be "euthanized!"

More specifically, from a Jewish parochial vantage point, the desert component of exile refers to the lack of interest in spiritual and Jewish matters; the lack of interest in studying Torah, which has been compared to water. The insidious process of assimilation, wherein Jews are oblivious to their own heritage and, in some extreme cases, cease to identify themselves as Jews is but, one more, painful example of the desert characteristic of

exile.

All this, and more, is what our Sages meant when they compared our existence in exile to a parched desert.

No Reason to Despair!

However, there is no reason for us to despair.

On the contrary. Where was G-d's first commandment to build a Sanctuary for Him given if not in the desert? And where was the Torah given to us if not in a desert?

This, however, begs the next question. How? How do we have the ability to transform a G-d-forsaken area and transform it into a Sanctuary for Him? From whence shall our consolation come?

Jacob Planted Cedar-like Leaders in Exile

The answer is provided by the Midrashic Sage, Rabbi *Tanchuma*. The word *Tanchuma* is etymologically related to the word that means consolation and comfort. Our source of comfort now lies in his words about what

Jacob did before he departed for Egypt. Jacob symbolizes the righteous and ideal individuals who are concerned for the plight of his their people in exile and whose inspiration derives from the Holy Land of Israel, which endows Jacob figures with the ability to transcend the mindset of exile.

Jacob's transplanting the cedars in Egypt, symbolizes how the first righteous leader took the souls of subsequent righteous leaders, who are compared to the majestic cedar trees, and transplanted them in Egypt, into exile situations, to enable them to rise above the terrible exile conditions.

No matter how difficult our lives may seem, materially and especially spiritually, we can be comforted ("Rabbi *Tanchuma*") by the belief and realization that G-d — through the efforts of our Patriarch Jacob — has transplanted the cedar-souls of Israel, into every, including, our generation.

Our generation has been blessed with the unprecedented guidance and leadership of the Lubavitcher Rebbe who has served as a Rabbi *Tanchuma*, a rabbi and Sage of consolation,

who has provided the Jewish people and the entire world with words of comfort and strength to overcome the obstacles of exile and build a Sanctuary for G-d, even in our heretofore parched desert.

The Rebbe's Consolation

Among all the many forms of inspiration that has come from the Rebbe's leadership, the one that stands out is his declaration and incessant emphasis that our generation is poised to enter into a new era, the coming of Moshiach and the permanent departure from exile.

The Rebbe also stressed the need for us to prepare for this glorious new era, not by sitting back and waiting for it to unfold, but to be a part of the change, by living our lives now in a "Messianic manner." This means simply, to live a life that is imbued with **increased** goodness, kindness and a pursuit of all that is holy and G-dly. All of these efforts are the stuff from which the third Holy Temple will be built, with the imminent coming of Moshiach.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

WHOSE TABLE IS IT?

Judaism has placed great emphasis on our table.

The table is not only the source of nourishment.

It is also the symbol of gratitude to G-d, Torah discussions and acts of kindness and charity.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY SIXTEEN

WHOSE TABLE IS IT?

The Vessel and its Function

When the Torah describes the various components or vessels of the *Mishkan* (the portable Sanctuary the Jews built in the desert) in this week's parsha, it provides us with a brief description for each of the vessels.

With regard to some of the vessels, the Torah does not tell us what their function was. That the Torah leaves for another section in which rituals associated with the vessels are given in detail. Here the focus is on the vessel itself and not on what ritual was associated with it.

For example, when the Torah describes the Menorah (the candelabrum) the Torah does not state explicitly here that it was kindled.

Likewise, when the altar is discussed, the Torah does not tell us that it was used for sacrifices.

Why is the Table Different from all Other Vessels?

Yet, when the Torah describes the *Shulchan*-table, it follows the details of its construction with the statement:

> "You shall place on the table *panim*-bread before Me at all times."

This refers to the ritual of placing special bread on the table, which would only be removed and eaten by the Priests every Shabbat. However, the old bread would not be removed until the new bread was placed on the table.

It is interesting to note that when Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah-Code of Law, describes the location of the various vessels of the Temple, he mentions the table as follows:

> The table is on the right, upon which the *panim*-bread was placed.

Why is it that both the Torah and Maimonides go out of their way to emphasize that the purpose of the table was to place upon it the special bread? Why doesn't the Torah do the same with the Menorah? Why doesn't it state there that the Menorah was used for lighting? Or that the Altar was used for the offering of sacrifices?

Self-Understood

The answer to this lies in the symbolism associated with the table.

When we reflect on the various vessels in the Temple we can readily understand their purpose. We can easily understand what function the Altar served. It was used for sacrifices, which was our way of showing our devotion to G-d. More specifically, the word for sacrifice in Hebrew is *korban*, which means to get close. The sacrifice, consisting of an animal, represented the Jew's desire to get himself, G-dly and animal soul, closer to G-d.

The Menorah, symbolizes light. Light is the ultimate metaphor for G-d's energy, the

Divine soul, the enlightening teachings of Torah, and the shining path of Mitzvot (the commandments). By kindling the Menorah in the Temple, one could feel the Divine light generated into the world and into one's heart.

A Table in the Holy Temple?

But, when we consider the function of the table, one is likely to wonder, what spiritual function did it serve?

Upon deeper reflection, the table in the Sanctuary was a constant reminder that everything we eat — and by extension, all of the material things that we consume — we are eating and consuming as guests on G-d's table. The bread is not an independent entity; it is a part and parcel of G-d's table.

This idea has been expressed by our Sages (Talmud, *Berachos* 35a) when they explain why we ought to recite a blessing before partaking of food. Without the blessing, it is as if we have taken the food from G-d's table without asking Him permission, or without being invited to His table to partake of G-d's resources. When we recite the appropriate

blessing before eating, it is our way of acknowledging that the food is truly G-d's. Now we are invited by G-d Himself to be His honored guests.

We can now understand why the Torah emphasizes that the table was used for the special bread, and that the bread must always be on the table. It is the Torah's way of stressing that one must always place his bread on G-d's table; one must always be mindful that his bread comes from G-d and that we are invited to be His table. The message is that the table and the bread were inseparable entities.

Setting the Table for the Future

Now, despite the fact that we are always guests at His table, this intimate relationship with G-d we enjoyed when the Temple stood in Jerusalem, is no longer so obvious. We therefore yearn and pray for the day that Moshiach will come and take us out of exile and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, at which time we will again feel our special place at G-d's table.

The connection between the Table in the Temple and the Messianic Age is related to the direction the Table was placed. The Talmud states that if one wants to become rich they should pray towards the north because the Table was in the north side of the Sanctuary.

The word for north in Hebrew is *Tzafon*, which can also mean "hidden," referring to the hidden Divine energy of the future, which was reserved for the righteous, as is stated in the book of Psalms (31:20):

> "How abundant is Your goodness, that You hid away for those who fear You..."

If one wants true wealth, one must follow the model of the Table in the Sanctuary, which entails the recognition that all of our blessings are G-d given.

Even more than the Menorah and the Altar, the Table symbolizes the future because only then will we realize the hidden Divinity in the physical, symbolized by the Table.

As a way of hastening and preparing for this process, we try to transform our own table

into a Divine table by inviting guests — particularly the poor — to share our meals with us.

A table can also be transformed into G-d's table and prepares us for the Messianic Age, when it is a table upon which words of Torah are exchanged.

And, of course, it is a Divine table when our meals are preceded and followed by the appropriate blessings.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

THE UPLIFTING GIFT

Giving is more than the exchange of an item from one person to another.

The word for giving in the Torah, *Terumah*, suggests the notion of sacrifice and uplifting.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

THE UPLIFTING GIFT

Exercise in Translation

Frequently we hear the discussion about the need to study the Torah in its original Hebrew. A translation, no matter how good—and there are some very good ones—is incapable of conveying the subtleties and multiple layers of meaning contained in the original Hebrew.

A good example of the richness of the original Hebrew is the word *Terumah*, the name of this week's *parsha*.

The word *Terumah* is translated as "offering," and it is mentioned in the following context:

> G-d spoke to Moses saying: "Speak to the Children of Israel that they shall

take unto me *Terumah*."

The Torah then goes on to enumerate the various items that they were requested to contribute for the building of the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary in the desert.

If all the Torah meant with the word *Terumah* is that the Israelites should offer their gold, silver etc. to the *Mishkan* fund, why couldn't it have simply stated: "Speak to the Children of Israel that they should give Me gold, silver, etc.? Why the need for the word *Terumah*.

Second, the Torah uses the expression, **"take** unto me Te*rumah*-an offering." Shouldn't it have said "**give** Me an offering?"

Separate and Elevate

The answer lies in a more fundamentally accurate translation of the word *Terumah. Terumah*, in fact, does not mean a gift or an offering. It derives from two separate roots that mean "separate" and "elevate."

In essence, the contributions to the *Mishkan* were not just a means to an end. Many would

view this narrative the way we would a modern day fund-raising campaign: There was a need for a Temple. Moses conducted a fund drive and made a pitch for contributions and the Jews gave.

This was not the case; it was much more than that. The process of giving here was not just a means to an end; there was intrinsic importance in the process of giving itself.

The Israelites were asked to do, at least, two things:

Giving Your Most Cherished Possessions

First they were to **separate** their own gold and silver and all that was precious to them, and give it away. This constituted much more than just giving a gift. A gift usually connotes giving something that one purchases specifically for someone else. Occasionally one will give away something that one already owns that is either, financially or emotionally trivial, or one has more than one such an item, or it is of no more use to you. A gift does generally not require separating something you own, which is on par with

your other possessions. How many people will take an expensive heirloom and give it away to a friend as a birthday present? Obviously, the routine gift or offering does not entail such a sacrifice and does not uplift the giver of the gift.

Here, by contrast, the Israelites were asked to do much more than just giving a gift; a token of appreciation; they were commanded to bring Terumah that involved separating something of great sentimental or monetary value from one's treasured possessions and parting with it.

Moreover, the Midrash teaches us that, in fact, gold was intended by G-d to exist only for the purpose of the Temple, however G-d in His infinite kindness allowed us to benefit from it as well.

The word *Terumah* was intended to inculcate the attitude that what we give to G-d — either by contributing to G-d's causes or to needy people for whom, G-d assumes responsibility — should involve truly the most important possessions we own, and that it is the very purpose why we were blessed

with these possessions in the first place.

Another Dimension of Giving

But, the simple translation of the word *Terumah* also provides us with yet another dimension of what it means to give.

When one takes his material possessions and separates them for G-d, one uplifts those very possessions. These items of gold and silver are no longer just gold and silver; they are now holy, objects that have become uplifted.

Indeed, not only are these objects elevated to a higher plane of existence, but, in addition, **we** the people who have parted with our items and have given them to a holy cause are likewise elevated, We are no longer plain mortals, we have achieved the level of angels, nay, we have even surpassed the level of any of G-d's creations and have assumed a relationship with G-d that transcends everything else in the universe.

Give or Take?

The Torah, therefore, does not simply state "**Give** Me an offering," but rather **"take** unto Me Terumah." By giving in the manner of *Terumah* described above, one **"takes** G-d." By giving a contribution one is just giving, by doing *Terumah* one uplifts himself or herself to the point where they can "take G-d," as it were.

And all this is contained in the simple five letter word *Terumah.*

Torah 40

The word *Terumah*, our Sages tell us, is also a composite of the word *Torah Mem*, which alludes to the Torah as it is connected to the letter *Mem*.

On one level this refers to the Torah that was given in the 40 days (*mem* is the numerical value of 40) that Moses was on Mount Sinai.

On another level it refers to Moshiach, which begins with the letter Mem, Furthermore, the Talmud states that the name of Moshiach is Menachem, which begins and ends with a *Mem* and in whose time, and through his

effort, we will experience the ultimate state of "uplifted-ness." By doing *Terumah*, not just giving, we hasten the process and prepare the world for the Messianic Age.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

"TODAY, I AM A *MISHKAN*!"

A Bar Mitzvah begins constructing his Sanctuary with the materials he accumulates in each of the preceding 13 years of his life.

Jewish education in these formative years determine the quality of the Sanctuary.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

"TODAY, I AM A *MISHKAN*!"

The 13 Items of the *Mishkan*

In the construction of the *Mishkan*— the portable Sanctuary—as is recounted in this week's parsha, the Jews were commanded to contribute their resources to this holy project.

According to Rashi, there were thirteen items that constituted the bulk of their contributions.

(Closer examination of the text yields a total of fifteen items. However, some commentators maintain that the two types of jewels were contributed by the leaders of the tribes and were not an integral part of the national effort that included all segments of the community.)

Every detail of the Torah is significant. This is

especially true with respect to the construction of the *Mishkan*, which played such a pivotal role in our history, since it epitomized the intimate relationship between G-d and His people. Notwithstanding their serious degeneration into idolatry when they constructed the golden calf, G-d was still willing to dwell in their midst by way of the Sanctuary. It is thus no wonder that the Torah dedicates almost four entire sections to the details of the construction of the *Mishkan*.

The Significance of the Number 13

In light of the central role of the *Mishkan*, it is indeed interesting to reflect on the significance of the number 13 as it pertains to the building of the *Mishkan*.

As Jews we are familiar with the number 13. Contrary to the perception in our society that it is an unlucky number, Judaism considers it to have much positive meaning.

(In truth, there is no such thing as a lucky or unlucky number. There are, however, numbers that have connotations that are

symbolic, auspicious and instructive.)

Of all the "thirteens," the one most famous is the age of thirteen when a boy reaches the age of maturity and becomes a Bar Mitzvah.

A girl becomes an adult (a Bas Mitzvah) a year earlier, at the age of twelve, which means that she becomes an adult as she enters into her 13th year. Thus, both boys' and girls' age of responsibility are associated with 13; the difference is that girls become mature at the **beginning** of their 13th year and boys at the end.

There are also other significant "thirteens," such as the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy that are enumerated later in the book of Exodus and form an important part of our Yom Kippur liturgy. There are also Thirteen Methods of Torah Interpretation and Thirteen Principles of Faith. *Ahavah*, the Hebrew word for love is numerically equivalent to thirteen, as is the word "one" in Hebrew, *Echad*.

When we become a Bar or Bas Mitzvah Mitzvah, the soul that entered into our body at the time of birth, naming and circumcision

becomes fully integrated and engaged within us. Bar and Bas-Mitzvah is thus the milestone in life that is the equivalent to the Sanctuary.

And just as there were **thirteen** different items that were donated to the *Mishkan*, so too, each and every year of leading up to the age of Bar Mitzvah, contributes one crucial ingredient that prepares us for the momentous event when our bodies become Sanctuaries for our Divine souls.

Yes, even the first few years of our lives are not just passing through years. What we absorb in our formative years stays with us and forms one of the components of our own *Mishkan*. The words, music and other influences that a one day old baby (indeed, even when it is in utero) is exposed to shape and mold the baby's receptivity to the Divine.

However, as was stated, the number thirteen also corresponds to the "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the "Thirteen Methods of Torah Interpretation," the Thirteen Principles of Faith" and the words *Ahavah*-love and *Echad*-unity.

The Three Thirteens; Three Pillars of the World

Upon deeper reflection, these items represent the three pillars upon which the world stands (Ethics of the Fathers Chapter One): Torah, Prayer and Acts of Loving Kindness.

The 13 methods of interpretation obviously correspond to **Torah**. The 13 Attributes of Mercy are invoked in our **prayers**. The idea of love is what motivates us to perform acts of **loving kindness**.

But all of the above must be based on the singular foundation of **faith** in the **unity** of G-d, the bedrock of Judaism.

Translating the above in practical terms:

The *Mishkan* that we build in our own lives must be based on the foundations of Torah, prayer and acts of loving kindness. These foundations, themselves, must be based on the more fundamental principle of faith in G-dly unity.

Waiting for Our National Bar and Bas Mitzvah

We can apply all of the above specifically to our unique role at this point in history, standing on the threshold of the period that separates between exile and Redemption.

The entire period of exile can be viewed in two ways. We can look at it just as a time of suffering an pain—which it certainly was—or we can also view it as a time of laying the foundations for the future role of the Jewish nation as they reach spiritual maturity.

Indeed, the period to follow the future Redemption has been characterized as the age of our collective Bar Mitzvah when our collective soul will be fully integrated within us as individuals and as a community, and will spread its light to the entire world.

But if the future era of Redemption is our Bar Mitzvah, we are presently in the period of preparation, where every positive action of ours can be compared to one of the thirteen items that were contributed for the construction of the *Mishkan*.

Now is the time for us to strengthen these foundations, by reinforcing our faith in the 13 principles of Judaism, strengthening our

study of Torah (that is interpreted in 13 ways), invoking G-d's 13 Attributes of mercy in our prayers, and by acts of Tzedakah and Loving-Kindness, which are expressions of love and parallel the 13 items contributed to the *Mishkan*.

And all of the above should be permeated with the spirit of *Ahavah* and *Echad*, love and unity, both of which numerically equal the number 13.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY NINETEEN

A TALE OF TWO VESSELS

The Menorah, the symbol of Torah, with all of its decorations, had to be made of one piece of gold.

Likewise, the way we embellish the Torah by discovering new meanings, must be of one piece with the Torah.

They must come from within the Torah itself.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY NINETEEN

A TALE OF TWO VESSELS

The One-Piece Menorah

This week's parsha describes in vivid detail the construction of the portable Sanctuary in the desert. This structure, known as the *Mishkan*, also contained certain vessels. These vessels were an integral part of the Sanctuary. They were the instruments through which the objective of the *Mishkan*—the revelation of G-d in this physical world—was realized.

One of the most interesting of these vessels was the seven branched candelabrum known as the golden Menorah. The Menorah, which was kindled each and every day, was intended to illuminate the entire world with its G-dly light.

One of the requirements of the Menorah was that it had to have seven branches adorned with ornamental cups, spheres, and flowers, and that all of its parts had to be made of one piece of gold.

In the words of the Torah:

> You should make a Menorah of pure gold. The Menorah should be made hammered (from a single piece of metal). Its base and its stem, its cups, spheres and flowers should all come from it, (Rashi: i.e., all of its parts must be hammered out of one piece of gold).

This task proved so difficult and elusive, even for Moses, that, as Our Sages explain, G-d told him to throw the gold into the fire and the finished Menorah would emerge.

What's the Difference Between the Menorah and the Ark?

Why was it so important for the Menorah to be made of one piece of gold? Furthermore, the Ark of the Covenant, arguably the holiest

and most important component of the *Mishkan*, was made with two separated layers of gold. In the beginning of this week's parsha the Torah describes the creation of the Ark:

> They should make an Ark of acacia wood… You should coat it with pure gold, coating it inside and out…

Why is it then that the Ark could be made of different layers of gold while the Menorah had to be made of one piece of gold, and as a result, its construction required Divine intervention?

The significance of our question is magnified when we reflect on the common spiritual symbolism of these two vessels.

Our Sages explain that both the Ark and the Menorah symbolize the Torah. The Ark is literally the vessel that houses the Tablets that contain the Ten Commandants, in which all of the commandments are hinted. According to the Talmud, the Ark contained an entire Torah scroll or, according to a dissenting view, the Torah scroll was placed in close proximity to the Ark. Likewise, the

Menorah is a symbol of the Torah because the Torah is Biblically likened to light.

In light (no pun intended) of the above, the question becomes even more acute. Why are the menorah and the Ark, both symbols of Torah, so different in regard to the requirement of one piece? Moreover, logic would dictate that the Ark, the holier of the two vessels, should have stricter requirements for its construction. Yet, only the Menorah had this requirement that it be made of one piece of gold. Why?

It's all Inside the Torah

The Menorah, as stated had seven branches. Each branch represented a different segment of the Jewish nation. Each branch also represented – and still does - a different approach to serving G-d. It was crucial that the Menorah be made of one piece, to signify that we are a united people despite our diverse approaches.

More specifically, as it relates to Torah: The diverse approaches to understanding the

Torah all contribute to the goal of illuminating the world.

But that was not the extent of the one piece requirement. Even the decorative cups, spheres and flowers had to be an integral part of the Menorah. Why?

These decorations symbolize the way we interpret the Torah. Although G-d gave us the Torah He did so intending that we interpret it and even go on to discover new ideas and meanings.

The Torah informs us that even these adornments to the Torah, i.e., our novel insights must be part of one whole. We cannot decorate and embellish the Torah with ideas that come from the outside. Torah does not need secular knowledge to enhance our understanding and appreciation for it. Whatever tools we use to better understand Torah must come from the Torah itself.

So while we have the license and indeed the obligation to derive new ideas from the Torah and provide novel interpretations to it, the "one piece" imperative reminds us of an important caveat:

One's novel insight cannot contradict accepted Torah knowledge. The Torah interpreter must play by the rules of interpretation as they were set forth by the Torah itself. Furthermore, the tools and the insights need not and ought not to come from "outside influences." On the contrary, the Torah was given to illuminate every aspect of life, including the mundane and secular and not the reverse. The Torah has all of the necessary parts to provide for its proper understanding and embellishment. What is not stated clearly in the Written Torah has been supplemented by the Oral Torah. And whenever there is some ambiguity as to what the Torah means, the Torah provides the tools to decipher its meaning and apply it to any of life's situations.

Three Aspects of Torah

More specifically, it may be suggested, the decorative cups are representative of the teaching techniques that we employ in spreading Torah knowledge. As the Rebbe

pointed out, the cups of the Menorah, according to Maimonides' depiction of them, pointed downwards. The cups, therefore, were not in the mode of receivers but rather that of givers.

The lesson here is that the methodologies for teaching are also contained in the Torah. While there is nothing wrong with using secular pedagogic techniques, they must not be at odds with the Torah's approach to education.

The decorative spheres of the Menorah, Rashi states, resembled apples, which symbolize the sweetness of Torah study. One can discover the beauty and sweetness of the Torah by delving into it without having to add sweetness from the outside. Any artificial sweetener or added sugar is unnecessary and can even be hazardous to our healthy rapport with the Torah.

The flowers, the most decorative part of the Menorah, symbolize the novel insights that embellish the Torah text. What might appear to be a dry presentation of laws can through the "flower method" be transformed into an

exciting excursion into the dynamics of the soul. These embellishments must also flow from the well of Torah itself.

The Three Levels of Torah

One may suggest that the three types of decorations parallel three of the four levels of Torah interpretation.

The cups, which are used to impart knowledge to the outside, symbolize *p'shat*, the straightforward teachings of the Torah. These are the most visible aspects of Torah knowledge and are easily taught.

The spheres, or apple-like ornaments, symbolize the level of *remez* (the approach that involves numerology and the like) which elicits a certain measure of the sweetness of Torah.

The flowers are the most decorative and beautiful part of the Menorah. They allude to the level of *d'rush* (the homiletical approach to Torah), which delves beneath the surface of the Torah to discover hidden messages and meanings.

The underlying message taught by the Menorah's decorative elements is that all of these levels, even though they require human effort, are an integral part of Torah itself. Outside knowledge should not be superimposed on the Torah.

The Ark: The Fourth Level

There is a fourth level of Torah interpretation. It is the level of *sod*, the most secret and esoteric dimension of the Torah. This level is symbolized by the elusive Ark which was in the Holy of Holies and thus was inaccessible to virtually all people. Even prior to the destruction of the first Temple, the Ark was hidden in an underground chamber.

The Ark that symbolizes the teachings of Kabbalah cannot be accessed through Torah study alone. It must come from outside sources. However, the outside source is not, G-d forbid, the secular world. Rather it refers to Divine inspiration or receiving this knowledge from Divinely inspired masters. This definition of "outside" is diametrically opposite to the meaning of the same term as

it was applied to the Menorah. There the "outside" was negated because Torah contains all the information that we need and does not have to be supplemented by outside sources of knowledge.

In the case of the Ark, by contrast, the outside refers to the transcendent source of Torah itself. Kabbalah, in fact, needs to be derived from the "Divine Outside."

Thus the Ark was made of an inside layer of gold and outer layer of gold to symbolize that the outer dimension of Torah is rooted in a higher plane and must be informed by it.

License Now Issued to Reveal the Torah's Innermost Teachings

We are now living on the cusp of the Messianic Age, the Final redemption, when the Ark and the knowledge it symbolizes will be fully revealed.

For centuries and millennia these teachings were kept secret because, among other reasons, there was a distinct danger that people would see the two layers of the Ark as

a license to interpret the Kabbalah from the wrong "outside" influence. Instead of seeking the Divine Outside by reaching into the deepest recesses of their souls to understand these G-dly teachings, they would apply their secular knowledge and mindset to kabbalah. Their ego-driven biases would superimpose themselves on these teachings and distort them.

However, we now stand at the threshold of the age of G-dly revelation, about which Maimonides states at the end of his monumental work, the Mishneh Torah (the study cycle of which was completed by Jews world-wide this past week):

> The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea.

In this era, license was given for us to study and concentrate on the inner teachings of Torah, especially as they are illuminated in the teachings of Chassidus.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWENTY

SOUTH OR NORTH

Having direction in life is crucial for our fulfillment of our Divine mission here on Earth.

Once we are on the right path, our next challenge is to take the journey itself and elevate it.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWENTY

SOUTH OR NORTH

Do Beams Have Rules?

The most significant components of the *Mishkan* were arguably the gold plated *kerashim* (vertical beams) which formed its walls. After describing the *kerashim*, this week's parsha sums up with: "You should erect the *Mishkan* in the proper manner (literally: "In accordance with its rules") as you will have been shown on the mountain."

What does the Torah mean when it says "in the proper manner?"

The Jerusalem Talmud (Shabbos 12:3) quotes Rabbi Immi, who poses this question and then answers it:

> "Do beams have rules? However, it refers to the beams that merited to be placed on the north should be placed in the north; [and beams that were

placed] in the south should be placed in the south."

Why the strong emphasis on not exchanging the beams situated on the north with the beams situated on the south, and vice versa?

A One Way Street: Up!

One approach to answering this question can be found in a principle in Jewish law that one must always ascend in matters of holiness and never descend. Since the north side of the Sanctuary was considered holier than the south, it would be improper to take a beam from that holier region and downgrade it to an inferior position along the south wall.

This law is echoed in an area of contemporary Jewish practice. It is customary to place a strip of silk on the front end of a *talis*-prayer shawl so that the front *tzitzis*-fringes are not switched inadvertently and worn on the back of the *talis*; the front being a more respectable and exalted position. Here too the guiding principle is: "We ascend in matters of holiness; we do not descend."

Another example of this principle relates to the order in which we perform the commandments of *talis* and *tefillin*. We first wrap ourselves in our *talis* and then we don the *tefillin*. Wearing *tefillin* imbues us with a holier state of consciousness than the *talis*, so this is entirely consistent with the foregoing principle of ascending in holiness.

Another well-known example of this principle is the order in which we light the Chanukah lights. According to the School of Hillel—and this is the prevailing practice—we kindle one light the first night and increase the number each successive night. One of the reasons the Talmud offers for this system (as opposed to the School of Shammai which maintains that we must begin with eight lights and reduce the number by one each successive night) is: "We ascend in matters of holiness; we do not descend."

On a personal note: On the occasion of my Bar Mitzvah in the year 5521/1961, I was privileged to have a private audience with the Rebbe (known as a *Yechidus*). The Rebbe tested me on the Talmudic dissertation it is customary for Bar Mitzvah boys to memorize

and recite (in addition to a Chassidic discourse). One of his questions was: "Is this principle that we ascend in matters of holiness and not descend a Biblical or a rabbinical imperative?" When I responded that I had not learned that, the Rebbe smiled and stated: "The Alter Rebbe also leaves this matter unresolved."

Whether it is a Biblical mandate or a rabbinical enactment, we are commanded never to stop our spiritual growth. One of the sources for this approach derives from this week's parsha and the "rule" that we not exchange beams on the north for beams on the south and vice versa. It is appropriate for us to delve somewhat more deeply here into this specific example.

From-Sheker-to-Keresh-to-Kesher

The Hebrew word for a beam is *keresh.* The Previous Rebbe's landmark discourse (issued to be studied on the day of his passing—*Yud Shevat*) explains that the letters of this word, when rearranged, can yield two words with diametrically opposite connotations: *sheker*-

falsehood or *kesher*-a bond. The Rebbe declares that the objective of constructing the *Mishkan* with these beams was to take the *sheker*-falsehood that pervades our existence in this physical world and transform it into a *kesher*-an unshakable and eternal bond with G-d. This we achieve by taking the physical objects and using them for higher purposes. When, for example, we take the *tefillin*, objects made from animal hides, and place them on our arms and heads we build a *keresh*-beam for our own Sanctuary and thereby transform ourselves and the world which we inhabit into a world that is connected to its Creator—from *sheker* to *kesher*.

However, there are multiple "beams" in our lives. Judaism is not a static, one-sided or monolithic way of life. It contains multiple directions and challenges. Judaism is a dynamic way of life, not just a religion. We are constantly being asked to go in different directions, and place our beams in both the north and south.

North Beams

North was the side of the Sanctuary that housed the Table upon which the special bread known as *Lechem Hapanim* was placed. The Talmud (Bava Basra 25b) sees this as a symbol of wealth. We must recognize that our material wealth is channeled to us through the Sanctuary. It is a blessing that comes from on High just like spiritual blessings.

This then is the lesson from the north beams:

When we: (a) acknowledge the Divine Source of our blessings, (b) harness our prosperity to perform more Mitzvos, (c) share our good fortune with others by giving tzedakah (at least 10 percent of our net income, but preferably 20 percent), we will have erected a beam-*keresh* in the north. We will have removed the *sheker*-falsehood of those who believe that it is their business acumen, personal resources and individual hard work that made them materially successful and that all of what they earned is theirs to keep for themselves.

Indeed, the very word for world in Hebrew is *olam*, the root of which is *helem*, concealment. Our material existence is, by definition, a form of obfuscation-*sheker*.

South Beams

The Menorah, by contrast, was situated in the south of the Sanctuary, with its focus on spiritual light and enlightenment. Situated near the Menorah on the south were the beams designed to transform the *sheker*-falsehood of the spiritual realms into connections-*kesher* with G-d and His ultimate purpose.

On the surface, the characterization of the spiritual realms—symbolized by the south—as false is somewhat surprising and counter-intuitive. Sadly, falsehood is not monopolized by the material and physical world. Spiritual levels are also referred to as *olamos*-worlds with the suggestion that they too can conceal the ultimate true and Divine message.

Spirituality and *Sheker*

Chassidus teaches us that even the highest spiritual worlds and levels of consciousness possess a subtle ego that covers up the Divine within them. In the human plane, we often find people who are extremely spiritual and with whom mystical ideas resonate, but who will dance to their own spiritual tunes, even when they may be in conflict with the values and dictates of the Torah. Whereas simple people will recognize their shortcomings and not try to make excuses for their failures, some spiritual individuals try to rationalize their irregular behavior by couching it in lofty terms.

While spirituality is certainly a necessary component of our Jewish lives, it is of value only when subordinated to G-d's will.

For example, when we perform a Mitzvah-A Divine commandment, we can do it mechanically, as an expression of our subservience to G-d. In these situations the Mitzvah is valid but devoid of spirit and soul. When we instill a sense of passion and love for G-d in the performance of that same Mitzvah, it becomes enriched and enhanced making for an ideal Mitzvah experience.

However, when one experiences the spiritual feeling without the actual performance of the Mitzvah it becomes a sophisticated way of shirking one's obligation and short-changing the person's true purpose in life. Spirituality too can thus be *sheker*-false and must be transformed into a *keresh*-beam for the Sanctuary that solidifies the bond-*kesher* between us and G-d.

However, we must take care not to exchange the north beams with the south. This is a significant meditation that can guide us in our physical lives. The more we can narrow the gap between our perception of the material world and G-d, the closer we come to realizing the objective of Creation: to make this physical world a dwelling place for the Divine.

The Hidden Challenge

Whatever messages have been imparted to us in the past by the teachings of the Torah assume great urgency in these last days of exile, when we stand on the very threshold of Redemption.

The Hebrew world for north is *tzafon*, which also can mean hidden. If the preeminence of the north side of the Sanctuary was important in the past, it is so much more so in the present. As we inch closer to the *Geulah*-Redemption, more and more of our hidden talents and energies—as well as our hidden foibles—are coming to the fore.

As important as it is for us to focus on the "south" challenge of knowing how to channel our spirituality in the right direction, the challenge from the "north" is even more crucial. We have to use our newly discovered talents to finish the task at hand and make the physical world the ultimate place for G-d's existence. As Tanya declares the creation of all the many spiritual realms was secondary to the creation of the physical world. G-d's heretofore hidden Essence (*tzafon*) can only be revealed in our lowly world when we devote every aspect of our lives—especially in these last moments of Galus—to the fulfillment of G-d's will.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

OUR COLLECTIVE BAR MITZVAH

Jewish history has gone through 13 periods.

We are at the 13th stage, on the very threshold of the Messianic Age of our collective Bar Mitzvah.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

OUR COLLECTIVE BAR MITZVAH

No Coincidences

In the construction of the *Mishkan*— the portable Sanctuary—as is recounted in this week's parsha, the Jews were commanded to contribute their resources to this holy project.

According to Rashi, there were thirteen items that constituted the bulk of their contributions.

If everything that happens is by Divine Providence, how much more so is it true with respect to the momentous event of the construction of the *Mishkan* (portable Sanctuary in the desert). The *Mishkan* cemented the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people and was emblematic of our purpose in life. We are here to create a

Sanctuary for G-d in our own lives, and ultimately throughout the entire world. It is thus no wonder that the Torah dedicates almost four entire sections to the details of the construction of the *Mishkan*, for indeed the entire Messianic vision, which is the realization of G-d's purpose for the creation of the universe, was set into motion with the construction of the *Mishkan*.

If the *Mishkan*'s objective was to make the world a "dwelling place for G-d, which is the Messianic vision, then the fact that it was constructed with the contribution of **13** items dictates that the number 13 has a direct bearing on its objective.

The Significance of the Number 13

The number 13 is significant in multiple ways. Here are 13 of them culled from Talmudic, Midrashic literature:

1) 13 Attributes of Mercy
2) 13 methods of Torah interpretation.
3) 13 Principles of Faith
4) 13 is the gematria (numerical equivalent) of the word "love"

(Ahavah)

5) 13 is the gematria of the word "one" (Echad).
6) Moses wrote 13 Torah scrolls.
7) 13 expressions of praise in the *Yishtabach* prayer.
8) G-d's name is mentioned 13 times in the Ten Commandments (more accurately, the "Ten Statements").
9) When translating the Torah into Greek, the Sages made 13 changes.
10) There are 13 musical notes for the reading of the Torah.
11) The section of the Shema, entitled *VoAhavta*, contains 13 instructions in it.
12) We were commanded to love G-d 13 times in the Torah.
13) Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai hid in a cave with his son for 13 years.

But of all thirteens, the one that stands out the most is the age of Bar and Bas Mitzvah (a girl becomes Bas Mitzvah at her 12th birthday which is the beginning of her 13th year).

Correlation of Bar Mitzvah to the *Mishkan*

There is a correlation between the age of Bar Mitzvah and the *Mishkan*. The purpose of the *Mishkan* was to construct our own personal sanctuaries within our own hearts and bodies. The Torah alludes to this in the words, "Make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell **in them**." It does not say "in it," but "in **them,**" to teach us that G-d wants to dwell within each and every individual. This process is achieved when we reach the age of maturity at Bar Mitzvah. That is when we build our own Sanctuary, comprised of the contribution of 13 years of preparation and education.

It stands to reason that since the *Mishkan* epitomizes the ideal of the Messianic Age, when the entire world will be one universal Sanctuary, that it is also connected to a Bar Mitzvah. Indeed, the Messianic Age is when the entire world, will reach its state of maturity and we will perform our Mitzvos with total understanding and knowledge.

Dividing History into 13 Stages

The analogy of the Messianic age to both Bar

Mitzvah and the *Mishkan* suggests that all of history, that has led us to the Messianic Age, consists of 13 items/stages. Each period of Jewish history has contributed to our maturity just as each of the 13 years of a child's life contributes to the stage of Bar Mitzvah. One does not become Bar or Bas Mitzvah in a vacuum; it require the preparation and education in the preceding 13 or thirteen years.

Similarly, all of our history, in all of its 13 periods, to be discussed, has paved the way for Moshiach. Each period's contribution combines with the next, because the good that we've accomplished is cumulative, while the negatives of each period get erased with the passage of time.

The Jewish people's Exodus from Egypt has been likened by the prophet Yechezkal to their birth. Hence the Egyptian bondage is the embryonic period of our history, and the Exodus is when we entered the world. In truth, the Exodus was not complete until we received the Torah at Mount Sinai at which time we were now a nation unto itself and no more a "nation within a nation."

As newborns, we receive our identity and the resources our soul needs to achieve our life's goal. Similarly, when we received the Torah, it established our identity for all times, set the goal and objective for the world and gave us the Master Plan to implement and realize that goal. This period lasted through the 40 year period we sojourned in the desert and prepared ourselves for the eventual entry into Eretz Yisroel, the Land of Israel. At this stage we were still in our infancy.

In stage two, we entered into Eretz Yisroel and began our education to transform the land into a dwelling for G-d, which would serve as a model for what we expect to happen in the Messianic Age for the entire world..

Stage three was the period of Kings David and Solomon who laid the foundation for, and actually constructed, a permanent Bais Hamikdash.

Stage four was the period of Babylonian exile, which produced the Festival of Purim, when, as our Sages state, we embraced the Torah willingly. Although it was exile, it did advance

us to the next level of preparation for the future.

Stage five was the return of the exiles to the Land of Israel and the construction of the Second Bais Hamikdash; a period which produced the festival of Chanukah; a foretaste of the light of the future.

Stage six, the period of the Tana'aim, followed the destruction of the second Bais Hamikdash and produced the greatest of Sages, such as Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi. They were responsible for compiling, collating, and editing the Oral Law. More specifically, it was the period of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who began the process of publicizing the secrets of the Torah in the Zohar, which, he was told by Moses, would eventually lead us out of exile.

This period, which culminated with the writing of the Mishnah, was followed by the seventh period of the Amoraim, who further developed the understanding of the Mishnah, interpreted and amplified its teachings and demonstrated to us how to apply Talmudic principles to the changing situations. This

period made it possible for us to implement the ideals of Sinai into an ever changing world and set of circumstances. This empowered us to elevate the world through the guidance of Torah and pave the way to the Final Redemption.

The Rabbanan Savurai and the Gaonim (the eighth period) put the finishing touches to the Talmud, making it Talmud accessible to us. This period also marked the beginning of the scattering of Jews to all the far flung corners of the world. The Gaonim were the Jewish spiritual leaders who communicated with all these communities and gave them guidance in all matters that pertained to their lives.

The ninth period, known as the period of the Rishonim (Early Commentators) featured giants such as Rashi, Maimonides and Nachmanides. Their contributions to Jewish knowledge included making the Talmud even more accessible to all segments of the Jewish people through their commentaries and codes of law. In this period, there was also a significant escalation of the mystical teachings of the Kabbalah (that was begun centuries

earlier by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai).

The 10th period, known as the period of the Acharonim (Latter Commentaries), began roughly with the writing of the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish law) by Rabbi Yosef Karo and the teachings of the greatest Kabbalist, the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi). The Arizal introduced Kabbalah in an unprecedented fashion by stating that "**now** it is a Mitzvah to reveal these teachings," as opposed to the previous restrictive attitude that prevailed.

This period continued until the Ba'al Shem Tov (the 11th period), who founded the Chassidic movement, and took the dissemination of the inner dimension of Judaism to a new high. The Ba'al Shem Tov reported that he had visited the soul of Moshiach and asked him when he would come. Moshiach's reply was "when your fountains [of Torah] will be spread to the most remote reaches of the world."

The Ba'al Shem Tov's cloaking his mystical teachings in short, pithy teachings constituted the embryonic stage of this effort; the every

last thrust towards the coming of Moshiach.

The Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings were then given a boost in the 12th period, through the teachings of his disciple's disciple, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi, known as the Alter Rebbe, who founded the Chabad, movement. The Alter Rebbe took the seminal and nascent teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov and introduced them into a cohesive and structured intellectual system, thereby enabling this heretofore mystical, esoteric and elusive knowledge to penetrate even the realm of intellect. Moreover, these teachings that have been digested and internalized into our minds have the capacity to affect the entirety of the person, through which it will ultimately reach and prepare the entire world for the Messianic Age.

The Thirteenth Period

The thirteenth and final stage can be said to have commenced when the Rebbe, the seventh leader of Chabad, assumed leadership and began a massive, all-encompassing effort to spread Judaism – Torah and Mitzvos and

the teachings of Chassidus – to every place on earth. The Rebbe, by sending shluchim-emissaries, to every nook and cranny of the world, to promote Judaism in the spirit of unconditional Ahavas Yisroel, as well as through the dissemination of the Seven Noag=hide commandments to the rest of society, and his emphasis on doing everything we can do to finally bring about the Redemption, brought us to, what the Rebbe referred to as, the very threshold of Redemption.

The Rebbe's efforts, which channeled and capped the efforts of all the preceding twelve periods have brought us to the Bar Mitzvah of the entire Jewish people and the world's entry into a new era of maturity.

The Rebbe exhorted us to be aware of the unprecedented stage we are in and to do the one Mitzvah that will finally put an end to the exile and bring the world to its fulfilment; its ultimate Bar Mitzvah.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

ADAR: THE MONTH OF TRANSFORMATION

Life with joy is a complete life.

Joy with Purim is an extraordinary life.

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE – PARSHA TERUMAH

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

ADAR: THE MONTH OF TRANSFORMATION

Increased Joy

As we enter into the joyous month of Adar, it is appropriate for us to reflect on the concept of joy as it pertains to this month specifically. This is the month—and the only month—about which it is stated in the Talmud: "When we enter into the month of Adar we increase our joy."

This statement implies that even before we enter into this month we have a need to be joyous. In the month of Adar when we celebrate the joyous holiday of Purim, we are obliged to "increase" our joy.

Now the reason why the entire month is a joyous month, although the miracle of Purim occurred in one or two days, is because the

Megillah (the Book of Esther) describes this month as, "the month in which their sorrow was transformed into joy etc."

Why is this Month Different from All Other Months?

But here again the question returns, why did the Megillah designate the entire month as a month of joy?

To paraphrase the Passover Haggadah: "Why is this month different from all the other months?" Why don't we say the same about the month of Nissan, for example, when we observe the festival of Passover, or the month of Tishrei, in which we celebrate the joyous holiday of Sukkos and Simchas Torah?

One answer to the question is based on the Talmudic narrative that when Haman decided to annihilate all the Jews he cast lots (hence the name of the holiday, Purim, which means lots) do determine in which month he should implement his nefarious plan. When the lots determined that it would be the month of Adar, Haman rejoiced because he thought it was an unlucky month for the Jewish people

since Moses passed away in the month of Adar. Little did he realize that this was also the month in which Moses was born. Hence it was truly a fortuitous month for the Jewish people.

From this story it is evident that the choice of the month of Adar by Haman was the catalyst that made the miracle of Purim happen.

Moreover, it symbolized the way G-d took the very basis for the plot against the Jews (i.e., Haman's belief that Adar was an unlucky month for the Jewish people) and transformed it into a blessing.

Thus the selection of Adar as a joyous month is based on the theme of transforming darkness into light and curses into blessings that punctuated the month of Adar then and we pray will occur now as well.

Joy beyond limits

We can now also shed light on the fact that the festival of Purim is unique in yet another

respect. On this day we must take our joy beyond the normal limits.

The Talmud states that we are supposed to drink on Purim to the extent that we no longer know the difference between "cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai." And while there are many interpretations of this statement (no commentator interprets it literally to curse Mordechai and bless Haman, G-d forbid), the common denominator in all of the interpretations is that on Purim our joy must be unconventional, out of the box.

And here at least two questions arise. Why is this holiday so unique with regards to joy?

Second, why this strange way of expressing boundless joy, that we no longer know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai?

However, in this statement lies the uniqueness of Purim. It is the holiday that takes the curses (Haman) and transforms them into blessings (Mordechai). And therefore our joy must also be so great that it expresses the notion of this transformation of darkness into light.

This also explains why it is such an unconventional holiday.

Besides the psychological basis for the enhanced joy that we experience when it is preceded with and converted from sorrow, there is also a profound spiritual reason for this unparalleled joy.

Evil: Testimony to G-d's Power

In the teachings of Kabbalah we are told that the existence of evil is testimony to G-d's infinite power to create something so remote from Himself. In other words, evil contains a spark of G-dly energy that is simultaneously singularly powerful and utterly concealed. When evil is thus transformed into goodness, it does more than just add more good to the world; it adds a new and infinite dimension of goodness and light that leads to unbounded joy.

This new dimension of goodness and joy is the one that we will all experience in the Messianic Age when all of the past sorrows and pain, darkness and evil, will be

transformed into "light, joy, happiness and glory."